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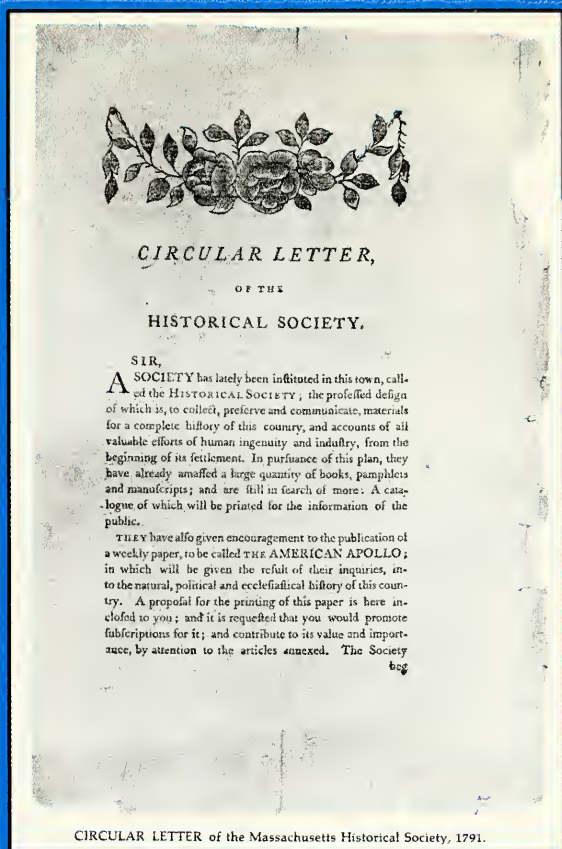
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Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic



*The Origins of State Historical Societies,
Museums, and Collections, 1791-1861*

Edited by
H. G. Jones

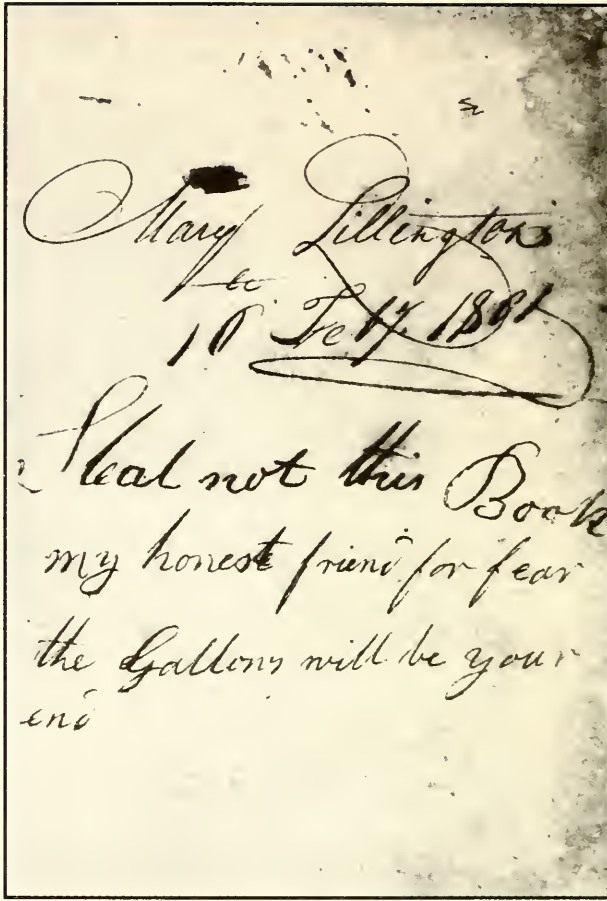


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Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic

The Origins of State Historical Societies,
Museums, and Collections, 1791-1861



Edited by


H. G. Jones

Chapel Hill
NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY, INC.
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1995

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Preface

In harmony with the state's motto (*esse quam videri*, "to be rather than to seem") the North Carolina Collection, with assistance from its private nonprofit support organization, the North Caroliniana Society, on 19-21 May 1994 chose to commemorate the 150th anniversary of its founding by sponsoring a national conference titled *For History's Sake: State Historical Collections in the Early Republic*. Attended by registrants from fifteen states, the conference featured papers by ten archivists and historians.

The tracing of historical activities during two full centuries was too broad a subject for a single conference, so this one covered seventy years, from the founding of the first state historical society in Boston in 1791 to the temporary dissolution of the Union in 1861. States with substantial antebellum progress were treated individually; those with less success prior to the Civil War were covered regionally.

The historian who dismisses early historical activists and their societies as merely antiquarian, provincial, romantic, and elitist fails to understand that in historical studies as well as in governmental bureaucracy "all progress begins when a new crowd takes over." That is, we tend to tout as new or innovative ideas and accomplishments that may have been pioneered or shared by one or more preceding generations. It is the nature of the study of history that revelation comes through acquired knowledge, the accumulation of which involves discarding myths as well as constructing new truths which by our descendants may be proved equally mythical. After all, "Truth is the shattered mirror strown in myriad bits; while each believes his little piece the whole to own."

Certainly—as is pointed out in a critical study of an exhibition referred to in Susan Stitt's paper—some of the founders of early historical societies did indeed seek to glorify the past rather than challenge the inequities and problems of their own times; ours is not the first generation to seek self-esteem by romanticizing the past and selectively preserving its record. Yet, with all their shortcomings, the pioneer activists gathered and protected resources that have been used by nearly two centuries of researchers to raise the study of history to its current level. For that alone we should be grateful. Even the most captious cynic should appreciate the modesty of the French-born president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania who in the 1830s reminded his colleagues, "We are not historians; our station, though respectable, is of humbler degree. Our first duty is to collect and preserve materials for future history. . . . All we have to do with respect to these [historical materials] is to collect them . . . and preserve them in a safe repository. . . ." Where is there today a historian with less self-interest?

In a discussion that concluded the conference *For History's Sake*, participants sought to place early historical efforts in the context of the 1990s. It was pointed out that virtually every branch of current liberal education was influenced by historical societies in the early republic. The list encompasses, in embryonic stage, the breadth of history—political, military, social, ethnic, family, community, oral, and geographical. It also

PREFACE

includes the collection, copying, editing, reformatting, publication, and preservation of primary documents, and their administration in libraries and historical societies; identification, marking, and preservation of historic properties and sites; and collection of natural and artifactual materials for the study of archaeology, anthropology, botany, zoology, geology, and other sciences. The societies pioneered the development of both history and nature museums; they utilized oral history in recording interviews and anecdotes; they multiplied access by printing previously unpublished documents and by reprinting rare and out-of-print materials; they built libraries, archives, and manuscript collections; and they started some of the nation's outstanding art collections. To be sure, their antebellum accomplishments were modest when measured by standards of the 1990s, but it is not surprising that the American Library Association was organized in the facilities of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and that the American Historical Association for its first couple of decades was led almost continually by historians associated with state and local history. The very first standing committees of the AHA—the Historical Manuscripts Commission (1895) and the Public Archives Commission (1899)—continued and vastly expanded enquiries that had been started during the antebellum era; and in 1905 the second volume of the association's annual report required 1,375 pages of small print to publish Appleton Prentiss Clark Griffin's *Bibliography of American Historical Societies* with entries dating back to 1791. The American Clio was born long before the twentieth century.

Because of the significance of early historical consciousness in the continuing study of history, an overriding consideration in the organization of the conference was the eventual publication of the sesquicentennial conference papers for the benefit of a wider audience. Almost without exception the authors lamented the scarcity of studies of the beginning of historical activities in the United States and repeatedly referred to the very few books and articles that even touch upon the subject. The paucity of such literature—except for Massachusetts—is especially troublesome for college and university courses in archival and historical administration. The North Caroliniana Society entertains three hopes for the present publication: first, that in the short term this volume may be found useful as a primer in the study of the origins of historical institutions; second, that these brief essays will encourage other researchers to probe deeper and more extensively into the development of historical societies, collections, and museums at the state and regional levels; and third, that other institutions will sponsor conferences and publish papers tracing the story through the postbellum era, when history became a subject of academic study, and into the twentieth century, when underpinnings were laid for the approximately 12,000 historical organizations on the American scene today. In his paper, Richard Cox, editor of *The American Archivist*, challenges students of archival and historical administration to use these brief summaries as starting points for more profound studies of a subject so germane to the origins of the American historical profession.

As is often the case with collected essays, those in *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic* vary in length, coverage, depth, and style. They are presented here with one simple objective: To bring together in one place a skeletal survey of the origins of historical institutions in the United States.

Because of its obligations to its members, the North Caroliniana Society devotes the closing pages to the proceedings and photographs of the banquet at which it bestowed its highest award upon the staff and donors responsible for the incomparable North Carolina Collection, now beginning its fourth quarter-century of service.

H. G. JONES

I

*Papers Read at the Conference,
"For History's Sake: State Historical
Collections in the Early Republic"*



CONFERENCE SPEAKERS, "FOR HISTORY'S SAKE"

Nine of the ten speakers pose for the opening of the conference on 20 May 1994 on the steps of Wilson Library on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, then celebrating the bicentennial of its founding as the oldest state university in the country. Left to right are James J. Heslin (New York), Alfred E. Lemmon (Trans-Mississippi States), Louis Leonard Tucker (Massachusetts), Leslie H. Fishel, jr. (Wisconsin), Philip P. Mason (Trans-Mountain States), Richard J. Cox (Other Atlantic States), Clement M. Silvestro (Other New England States), Susan Stitt (Pennsylvania), and Charles F. Bryan, Jr. (Virginia). At right is H. G. Jones, conference coordinator and master of ceremonies at the Sesquicentennial Banquet that ended the conference. Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard, who spoke on North Carolina at the banquet, was not present for the photograph. (All photos by Jerry W. Cotten and Frederick N. Stipe, North Carolina Collection.)

Massachusetts

Louis Leonard Tucker

[Louis Leonard (Len) Tucker has been director of the Massachusetts Historical Society since 1976. He holds three degrees from the University of Washington and was a college teacher until he entered historical society work in 1960. For six years he directed the Cincinnati Historical Society, then served for ten years as state historian and assistant commissioner of education for the state of New York. A productive author, Dr. Tucker has been active in historical and cultural organizations and served as president of the American Association for State and Local History.]

The Massachusetts Historical Society

The history of collecting Americana in a formal, systematic way began in the United States on 24 January 1791 with the founding in Boston of the Massachusetts Historical Society.¹ Although established in Boston, the society had its origins in the rustic community of Dover, New Hampshire, where in the 1770s the Reverend Jeremy Belknap, minister of that town's Congregational Church, began research on what was to become a sterling three-volume history of the Granite State. While undertaking this study, Belknap conceived the idea of a historical repository of Americana. Jeremy Belknap, then, may be viewed as the "father" of American historical societies.

Born in Boston on 4 June 1744, Belknap was a fifth-generation New Englander. He was educated in the classical tradition at the Boston Latin School and Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1762. His pious parents, both of Puritan background, had pointed him in the direction of the Congregational ministry from birth, and the dutiful son, a serious, industrious youngster, willingly followed that path. In 1767, after five years of teaching school and reading theology, he was called to the pulpit in Dover. He remained there for nearly twenty years, until late 1786.

Shortly after settling in Dover, Belknap decided to write a history of New Hampshire in his spare time. That he should have undertaken such a study was not surprising. He had a love of history, in general, and

American history, in particular. His intense interest can be attributed to four factors: his Puritan heritage, which placed a transcendent value on the study of human history; the influence of the Reverend Thomas Prince, his minister at the Old South Church and one of colonial New England's most accomplished historians; his training at Harvard, where he became an avid student of European history and developed an appreciation for the craft of writing history; and the American Revolution and the powerful nationalistic surge that accompanied this event.

Soon after beginning research on his history of New Hampshire, Belknap realized he had undertaken a labor of vast dimensions. As a disciple of Prince, he was committed to using original sources, but there was no corpus of primary materials in New Hampshire. No one had had the foresight, interest, or energy to collect documentary sources pertaining to New Hampshire's past and store them in a repository. Belknap had to travel throughout the province to locate relevant documents. He spent many hours in public offices and "in the garrets and rat-holes of old houses." Doggedly persistent in his research, he wrote: "I am willing even to scrape a dunghill, if I may find a jewel at the bottom."

Belknap's research experience convinced him of the critical need for a historical repository, not only in New Hampshire but in the other states as well. He was keenly aware that Americans intent upon researching and writing history were seriously disadvantaged because of a lack of sources.

The young nation was not without libraries, but those few that existed were subscription libraries, committed to collecting *belles lettres*, not historical source materials. Among these were the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731; the Library Company of Charleston, South Carolina; and the New York Society Library. Even in New England, the most culturally advanced region of the United States, there were only three libraries of note: the Harvard and Yale College libraries, used almost entirely by the students and faculty, and the Redwood Library in Newport, Rhode Island, a subscription library. None of these concentrated on collecting primary historical materials.

The nation's two learned societies—the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston—focused on discussions and publications, not on developing a library. They were designed to further "practical and useful knowledge" rather than the humanities. Their principal interest was natural science, not history.

It was very different for European historians. In England, for example, researchers had access to the British Museum, the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries of London, British governmental offices, and the

celebrated university libraries at Cambridge and Oxford. Continental scholars were similarly blessed with a rich supply of well-stocked repositories, from the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in Paris, to the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, to the Royal Library in Berlin.

For Belknap, what really underscored the need for repositories in America was the rapid—and alarming—loss of important documents and other historical materials. He emphasized the crisis in a letter to John Adams in 1789: "The want of public repositories for historical materials as well as the destruction of many valuable ones by fire, by war and by the lapse of time has long been a subject of regret in my mind. Many papers which are daily thrown away may in future be much wanted, but except here and there a person who has a curiosity of his own to gratify, no one cares to undertake the collection and of this class of Collectors there are scarcely any who take care for securing what they have got together after they have quitted the stage."

Belknap was especially distressed by the losses in his native state over a period of years. Fires had destroyed the courthouse in Boston in 1747 and the Harvard College library in 1764; in both cases, nothing of historical value survived. A band of "patriots" had sacked Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson's elegant home in Boston in 1765, during the Stamp Act crisis, scattering or destroying many valuable documents pertaining to Massachusetts' colonial era; Hutchinson had painstakingly collected these for use in his history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. British troops had ransacked the Court of Common Pleas as they were preparing to evacuate Boston in 1776 and thrown numerous legal documents in the adjoining streets.

The most painful blow of all to Belknap was the damage sustained by Thomas Prince's incomparable collection called the "New England Library." After Prince's death, his books and manuscripts were stored in the steeple of the hallowed Old South Church. It was not an appropriate repository for this outstanding collection. Even before the Revolution, it had suffered the effects of neglect and unauthorized removals. Books and documents disappeared and the remaining items fell into a state of disarray. During the Revolution, British troops occupied the Old South Church and dispersed the "greater part" of Prince's "noble collection of manuscripts." Belknap blamed the king's soldiers for the "irretrievable loss," calling it a "sacrifice to British barbarity." Wrote Belknap: "Had we suffered it by the hands of Saracens, the grief had been less poignant."

While Belknap formulated the idea of a historical library during his residency in Dover, he had no intention of implementing his plan in that

town. He knew it could not be done there. Dover was a provincial community with a population of only 1,600 residents. It lacked a sufficient nucleus of learned citizens who would use and support such a facility.

Belknap left Dover in 1786, returning to Boston in the following year to become minister of the Long Lane Church. He developed a renewed interest in organizing a historical repository. He was certain that the Boston area could sustain such a program. He concluded that the most expedient course of action was to append the facility to the Harvard College library in adjacent Cambridge.

This was not a new idea for Belknap. He had projected a similar plan as early as 1774. Writing to a friend, he proposed that someone collect sources relevant to the growing Anglo-American controversy and deposit them in the Harvard library for a "future historian." He asserted that "the present Times exhibit so critical and important a Scene as must make a distinguished figure in the Eyes of posterity and thence arises a necessity that a properly authenticated Series of information impartially collected should descend to them." He further noted that there were in the "Libraries and Custody of Gentlemen of the present age many materials which are now neglected and which may soon be scattered the loss of which posterity may regret as much as we do now the carelessness of former Times."

Belknap also listed the items he regarded as having value for a future researcher: "Political pamphlets, Newspapers, Letters, funeral and Election Sermons and many other papers which are now regarded only as beings of a day may if preserved give posterity a better idea of the Genius and Temper of the present age (and of our most material Transactions) than can be derived from any other source."

In 1780, at the height of the Revolution, Harvard officials sought to implement Belknap's earlier suggestion. The Board of Overseers voted that the corporation should consider acquiring for the library "every thing that has been written that is worth preserving, relative to the present controversy between Great Britain and this country." But again there was no follow-up.

At this point the Reverend William Gordon entered the scene. An English minister and Whig historian, Gordon had emigrated to the colonies in 1770 and in 1772 had taken a pulpit in nearby Roxbury. In 1775, "struck with the scenes that were opening upon the world," the farsighted Gordon began to collect documents on the Anglo-American crisis.

When the war finally erupted, Gordon proposed to the Harvard officials the exact plan Belknap had contemplated in 1774: the college should appoint a committee to collect "written and printed materials, for

the use of some future historian, and deposit them in the library." The officials approved the plan and urged Gordon to head the committee. "A bustling busybody," as John Adams described him, Gordon agreed to do it, but that became the extent of his involvement. It was a still-born project.

The Harvard officials revived the plan again in 1787. Belknap, an overseer of the college, sensed that he would be asked to undertake the project: "Some of the gentlemen in the government of the College are anxious to revive the matter; and, if they put it forward, I shall expect that part of the business will fall upon me, for I have often experienced that, where there is much labour and little profit, I am not out of employ. . . ."

Belknap's hunch proved correct. The Harvard officials "put it forward" and, ever the doer of good works, he accepted the assignment. Through the spring and summer of 1878 he worked diligently to acquire materials. He sought to have the college purchase Ebenezer Hazard's extensive collection of American newspapers and pamphlets but was met with indifference. He persisted but there was still no response. Finally, he became exasperated. As he informed Hazard: "it was allowed to be an object worthy of attention, but no body seemed in earnest about prosecuting it—say and do you know are 2 Things." And further: "I imagine it would be a long-winded, and perhaps ineffectual business, to set on foot a collection of dead materials for the use of a future historian. They acknowledge the utility of such a thing, and that is all."

Harvard's failure to act with dispatch and to honor its stated intention led Belknap to rethink the issue of a repository. Attaching this program to the Harvard library now appeared to be unrealistic. Nor was there any other prospective institution in Boston or Cambridge to which a historical library could be linked.

Belknap concluded that the most sensible plan was to assemble a group of historically minded men from the Boston area and establish an independent organization, a "Society of Antiquarians." This was a vision much broader than the one he had held earlier. He now contemplated not only a library but a membership organization, much like the American Academy of Arts and Sciences or American Philosophical Society.

The model for this type of institution was the Society of Antiquaries of London, the oldest historical body in the world. Since Belknap was closely attuned to British cultural affairs, especially in London, there can be no question that he was familiar with the Society of Antiquaries. By the 1780s, it was well-known throughout Great Britain.

Belknap earnestly "wished that a beginning could be made," but events conspired against him. Throughout 1788 and 1789, his attention, and that

of most Bostonians, was diverted by two critical public issues: Shays's Rebellion and the ratification of the federal constitution in Massachusetts.

When these two momentous issues were resolved, Belknap again turned his thoughts to establishing a historical organization. In the latter months of 1789, he discussed his plan with four Bostonians who shared his historical interests. They agreed to participate in his project, and Belknap decided to act. On 27 August 1790, he prepared a draft of a "Plan of an Antiquarian Society." The late Julian Boyd, the peerless Jeffersonian scholar, called Belknap's plan "the charter of the historical society movement in the United States."

Belknap's momentous document contained a number of key provisions that offer insight into his conception of the proposed organization. He wrote that the society was to be formed for the purpose of "collecting and communicating the Antiquities of America." It is interesting to note that he first inserted "Historical" after "communicating" but then drew a line through it and added "the Antiquities of America." The final word, America, bears special significance since it connotes the national scope of the program. Belknap underscored this point in elaborating on the duties of members: each member "shall engage to use his utmost endeavors to collect and communicate to the Society manuscripts, printed books, and pamphlets, historical facts, biographical anecdotes, observations in natural history, specimens of natural and artificial curiosities, and any other matters which may elucidate the natural and political history of America from the earliest times to the present day." Belknap's reference to "specimens of natural and artificial curiosities" indicated his intention to attach a museum component, or "cabinet," to his library.

Belknap's plan also called for the creation of a national network of societies. The members of the Boston society were to contact "gentlemen in each of the United States requesting them to form similar societies and a correspondence shall be kept up between them for the purpose of communicating discoveries and improvements to each other." Each society was to publish periodically communications of a uniform size, and there would be a free exchange of these publications among all thirteen organizations. This was visionary thinking at a high level, considering the provincial nature of the United States in 1790.

Belknap's plan came to fruition on 24 January 1791. On that day, he and seven others met, selected a slate of officers, and approved a constitution, the preamble of which set forth the purposes of the new organization:

The preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts and records, containing historical facts, biographical anecdotes, temporary projects, and beneficial

speculations, conduces to mark the genius, delineate the manners, and trace the progress of society in the United States, and must always have a useful tendency to rescue the true history of this country from the ravages of time, and the effects of ignorance and neglect.

A collection of observations and descriptions in natural history and topography, together with specimens of natural and artificial curiosities, and a selection of every thing which can improve and promote the historic knowledge of our country, either in a physical or political view, has long been considered a desideratum; and as such a plan can be best executed by a society whose sole and special care shall be confined to the above objects: We the subscribers do agree to form such an association, and to associate for the above purposes.

It should be noted that the constitution deviated from Belknap's skeletal plan in a number of important ways. The most significant difference was in the choice of title. Belknap's "Antiquarian Society" was replaced by the "Historical Society." The change was prompted by the group's determination to provide a direct historical focus to the program of the newly-founded organization, and to draw a sharp distinction between themselves and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In a letter to Benjamin Trumbull of Connecticut, co-founder John Eliot affirmed the group's decision to stress its historical mission by naming the organization "the Historical Society, because it comprehends every thing relating to this country,—its antiquities, its history, civil, natural, and ecclesiastical. We confine our attention here, and hence are we different from the Academy and other literary societies. To pursue one particular subject is the only way of succeeding. We mean to confine our attention to this business of collecting things which will illustrate the history of our country."

"We have now formed our Society," a pleased Belknap informed Ebenezer Hazard on 19 February 1791, "and it is dubbed, not the Antiquarian, but the 'Historical Society'. . . . We intend to be an active, not a passive, literary body; not to lie waiting, like a bed of oysters, for the tide (of communication) to flow in upon us but to seek and find, to preserve and communicate literary intelligence, especially in the historical way. We are not, however, quite ripe for action."

When planning the society, Belknap had proposed to the fellow founders that each donate materials from his personal collection to establish a nucleus for the library. Belknap had in mind historical sources, such as books, pamphlets, manuscripts, maps, broadsides, and similar paper materials.

Belknap also was committed to establishing a museum or cabinet. As a son of the Enlightenment, he implicitly believed in the unity of all

knowledge. History was simply one branch of a universal science. "Historical knowledge" embraced a "physical or political view." The purpose clause in the society's constitution underscored the need to collect "specimens of natural and artificial curiosities," in addition to "books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and records." Thus, Belknap approved the collecting of ostrich eggs, shark jaws, a "very large Flamingo," and other oddities of the natural realm.

All but one of the founders made contributions to the library. Wishing to lead by example, Belknap made the most substantial donation. He gave a number of books and a large body of manuscripts, many of which he had collected in Dover while researching his *History of New Hampshire*. Some of the manuscripts dated from the seventeenth century, but most were eighteenth-century documents, such as the correspondence of Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts, Governors Benning and John Wentworth of New Hampshire, and General William Pepperrell, the hero of the Louisbourg campaign of 1745. By any standard, the gifts of Belknap and the other founders represented an impressive base for the library. Once this cornerstone was established, Belknap embarked upon a one-man crusade to enlarge the collection. As he wrote: "Let it be remembered that this Society is formed, not for the purpose of *waiting* for communications, but that the spirit of the Society is *active*." Belknap best summarized his aggressive attitude as a collector in 1795: "There is nothing like having a *good repository*, and keeping a *good look-out*, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey."

Belknap's quest had no geographical limits. It extended from Boston to Europe and beyond. Residents of the Boston area naturally became his primary targets. He badgered members of the society and every local figure who either had participated in significant historical events, were witnesses to history, or had achieved a degree of historical eminence, from John, Abigail, and Samuel Adams to John Hancock to Paul Revere.

As corresponding secretary of the society, he maintained close contact with all members residing outside Massachusetts. His frequent letters to these distinguished persons, who lived in every section of the nation and a few foreign countries, almost always included an appeal for donations to the library. Belknap himself had nominated many of these men for membership, and it is apparent that his selections were based upon their capability to provide gifts for the library, either from personal holdings or through solicitations of others—or both.

Belknap also targeted congressional officials for donations. Intent upon adding federal documents to the collection, he made requests to the

United States Congress for copies of "printed acts, journals, reports, treaties, letters, proceedings of courts-martial and other papers relative to the public affairs of the United States, civil and military, foreign and domestic." He then reinforced these appeals by writing to congressmen who were members of the society, imploring them to monitor his requests and make certain they were implemented.

Belknap also cast his net to Europe. From his days in Dover, he had carried on a brisk correspondence with learned men in Great Britain, and with the German bibliophile, Christopher Daniel Ebeling, the most active private collector of Americana on the continent. The society received a number of gifts from these sources.

In his solicitations to correspondents, members and non-members, the acquisitive Bostonian inserted a "Circular Letter of the Historical Society." This was a printed document containing a prefatory segment that explained the society and its purposes and programs, a detailed questionnaire requesting basic historical information on the community in which the recipient resided, and an appeal for contributions to the library-museum: "Any books, pamphlets, manuscripts, maps or plans which may conduce to the accomplishment of the views of the Society; and any natural or artificial productions which may enlarge its museum, will be accepted with thanks."

Was the Circular Letter a successful device? The frequent gifts to the library which flowed in from all areas of the nation and western Europe, and which were reported at society meetings, strongly suggest that Belknap's tactic was a solid success.

In sum, Belknap's role in building a base for the society's historical warehouse was of major dimensions. In this connection, his personal benefaction needs to be underscored. Of the society's printed *Catalogue* of the library in 1796, Belknap contributed 171 items, or nearly 15 percent.

Belknap continued his active collecting until 1798 when he suffered two slight strokes. He reduced both his ministerial duties and regular activities with the society but continued to solicit materials. This fire could not be extinguished. On 14 June, he wrote to Abigail Adams, requesting information on General John Skey Eustace, who had served in the American army during the Revolutionary War, and inquiring whether her husband, John, "owned Thurloe's State Papers." Six days later, he suffered an attack of apoplexy which left him paralyzed and speechless. He died later that morning at the age of fifty-four.

After Belknap's death the process of collecting historical sources at the society continued unabated. Others took up the baton. From 1798 to the

Civil War (and beyond), the library and, to a lesser extent, the museum experienced sustained growth.

Meeting after meeting, year after year, the incumbent librarian reported a full list of acquisitions.² At the meeting of 31 January 1809, to cite but one example selected at random, the librarian acknowledged receipt of the following items:

For the Collections:—

An Account of the Capture of the Ship "Hope," . . . by Captain Mugford, in June 1776, with a List of Naval Commanders belonging to that town who distinguished themselves in the Revolutionary War. From John Prince, Esq.

A file of Papers, containing a Letter of King Charles II. to Governor Winthrop, 1661; a Letter of Sir Edmund Andros, 1608; of Governor Coxe, 1690; of Jeremiah Dummer, 1711; of William Bollan, Esq., 1750 and 1758; and copy of a Letter to the Agents of the Colonies, 1758. From the Heirs of Thomas Fayerweather, Esq.

An original Letter of Richard Henry Lee to Samuel Adams, Feb. 5, 1791. From a Friend.

Memoirs of Rev. Charles Morton, of Charlestown, by Rev. Dr. Holmes.

Memoirs of Rev. John Lothrop, the first minister of Barnstable, by Rev. Dr. Lathrop.

Obituary of the Town of Middleborough, by Hon. Isaac Thomson, Esq.

A Letter from Rev. Habijah Weld to Mr. Prince, being in answer to certain queries for his Annals; an Historical Narrative of Newspapers in New Hampshire; a file of Letters from Dr. Kennicot, Court de Gebelin, and Mr. Hollis; an original Indenture, Thomas Danforth on one part, John Davis and others, trustees, on behalf of New York, &c., 1684. From Rev. Timothy Alden, Jr.

A curious Manuscript, in short hand, written in 1732, containing Texts, Heads of Sermons, &c. From Dr. Allman, of Halifax.

For the Library:—

Grotius de Origine Gentium Americanarum; Historia Vinlandiae, a Thormodo de Torfeo, Historico Refio; Histore du Cap Breton; Voyages aux Côtes du Chili, du Pérou, et Brésil, par N. Frezier, 1712, 1713, 1714; and Lawson's Voyages to South Carolina. From Mr. Obadiah Rich.

Laws of the State of New York, three volumes, from Hon. Stephen Van Rensselaer, Esq.

Documents of the First Session of the Tenth Congress, and Documents of the Session from November, 1808, to March, 1809. From Hon. Josiah Quincy, Esq.

The Works of Fisher Ames, from Hon. George Cabot, Esq.

Harris's Tour to the Territory north-west of the Alleghany Mountains; Volume of Sermons addressed to Freemasons; and Sermon on the Landing of the Fathers at Plymouth, preached Dec. 22, 1808. From the author.

Pharmacopoeia; Report on Vaccination; and Medical Papers, Nos. 1, 2, and 3. From the Massachusetts Medical Society.

Georgical Papers, from the Trustees of the Agricultural Society.

Adams's Defence of the American Constitutions, from Thomas Adams, Esq.

Eulogy upon President McKeen, with the President's Inaugural Address; and a Sermon Preached at the Festival of John the Baptist, 1807. From the author, Rev. William Jenks.

Humphrey's Account of the Missionary Societies, from Mr. Samuel Jenks.

Holmes's Sermon before the Society for Propagating the Gospel, 1808; and Holmes's Fast Sermon, 1809. From the author.

Buckminster's Sermon upon the Death of Governor Sullivan. From the author.

Questio Physica Inauguralis de Somno, quam Eruditorum Examini subjecit Thomas Brown, Britannus; Questio de Mania, Johannes Wharton, Virginiensis. From Rev. Charles Lowell.

A volume of occasional Sermons, from Rev. William Emerson.

Allen's Election Sermon, 1808; and Allen's Historical Sketch of Berkshire and the Town of Pittsfield. From the author.

Norton's Discourse on 1 Tim. II.4, from the author.

Thomson's Reply to Norton's Sermon, and Rely's Cherubimical Mystery, from a Friend.

Josselyn's Rarities of New England, from Mr. Joseph Cogswell

Address of the Philadelphia Bible Society, and first Report read, May 1, 1809; and Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, 1809. From Ebenezer Hazard, Esq.

A collection of Pamphlets published by the Portland Committee of Safety, January, 1809, from Mr. Calvin Day.

Wood's History of President Adams's Administration; Rules and Orders of Massachusetts House of Representatives; Election Sermon, 1809; and Artillery Election Sermon, 1809. From a friend.

Review of the Works of Fisher Ames, Esq.; Essay on the Rights of Nations relative to Fugitives from Justice; Inadmissible Principles of the King of England's Proclamation, by the late President Adams; and White's Oration, July 4, 1809. From David Everett, Esq.

Remarkables of Dr. Increase Mather, from a Friend.

Two volumes of Miscellanies, neatly bound; volume of Manuscript Sermons, preached at the First Church in Boston, 1652 and 1653, written by Seaborn Cotton; Connecticut Election Sermons, 1801, 1802, 1803; First three numbers of the American Magazine, 1743; Report of the Opinion of the Court in the case of Penhallow *versus* Doane, 1795; and several Sermons and other Pamphlets, &c. From Rev. Timothy Alden.

Dunbar's Ordination Sermon at Canton, with Historic Documents of that Town, from the author.

Hancock's Election Sermon, 1722, from Rev. Thomas Gray.

Two volumes of the Worcester Magazine; thirty volumes of the Massachusetts Spy, neatly bound in seventeen. From Isaiah Thomas, Esq.

Baring's Inquiry into the Orders of Council; A Faithful Picture of New Orleans; Gallatin's View of the Public Debt, &c.; The Yankee Farmer's Inquiry about the Affair of the Chesapeake; several Pamphlets relative to the same business; Embargo Laws; Pickering's Correspondence; Report of the Committee on the Exchange Bank, Rhode Island; five Sermons before the Humane Society; and Missionary and other Sermons, to the number of twenty. From a Friend.

Centinel, 1808, from Major Russell.

Chronicle, 1808, from Adams & Rhoades.

Palladium, 1808, from Young & Minns.

Boston Gazette, 1808, from Russell & Cutler.

Repertory, 1808, from Dr. John Park.

Patriot, 1808, from David Everett, Esq.

New York Spectator, 1808, from E. Belden & Co.

For the Cabinet:—

An Impression on Copper from the Gold Medal which was presented by Congress to Commodore Preble, from Hon. Robert Smith.

Specimens of Sand, Marble, Schistus, Sulphuret of Iron, from various parts of the United States; specimens of Gypsum, from St. George's; Tourmaline, from Brattleborough; Nautilus, and other Shells, from the Feejee Islands; Basement of a Pillar, from ancient Syracuse; specimens of Lava, from St. Vincent; a remarkable Knife, dug up at Wakefield, New Hampshire. From Rev. Timothy Alden.

Specimens of Garnet, found imbedded in a rock at Bedford, from Rev. Samuel Stearns.

Part of the Monumental Stone erected in Sudbury, where an Indian battle was fought, 1676, from a Friend.

A Silver Instrument for branding Negroes, from a Friend.

Six Copper Coins of Roman Emperors; ten Copper Coins of the United States; six Silver Coins of England; and Bills of the old Paper Money in 1714, and of Massachusetts and old Continental emission, from one dollar to twenty. From a Friend.³

Multiply this list a hundred fold and it becomes apparent why the Massachusetts Historical Society became the greatest historical treasure house in pre-Civil War America.

The Boston Athenaeum

The Boston Athenaeum was the second major research library founded in Massachusetts.⁴ This institution owed its origins to a group of fourteen bookish Bostonians who banded together in 1805 to establish the Anthology Society for the purpose of producing *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, a literary periodical. The members of the society began the practice of holding weekly dinners at which they discussed literary matters. Realizing the need for reference books and periodicals to complement their discussions, they took the next step and rented and stocked a reading room for their own use in 1805. In the following year, they opened their quarters to subscribers.

William Smith Shaw, the first librarian and "real founder" of the fledgling organization, wrote in some excitement to a friend on 1 December 1806: "We have taken rooms in Congress St. in what are called Joy's buildings, which we shall occupy until the spring when we expect to be able to procure more commodious rooms. We have had nearly a thousand valuable books presented to us and one hundred and sixty dollars in cash."⁵

From these small beginnings the concept of a formal library took shape. On 1 January 1807, a group of trustees appointed by the society issued a public document, *The Memoir*, in which they announced their intention of founding "an establishment similar to that of the Athenaeum and Lyceum of Liverpool in Great Britain; combining the advantages of a public library, containing the great works of learning and science in all languages, particularly such rare and expensive publications as are not generally to be obtained in this country; with a reading or news room, furnished with all the celebrated political, literary, and commercial journals of the day, foreign and domestic."⁶ They particularly hoped to procure works illustrating the history of the United States and to provide the books essential to the development of American scholarship and literature. They placed their focus upon printed works, not documentary material.

The objectives of the proposed institution were to foster scholarship, literature, science, and the visual arts. The founders projected a headquarters which would house a library, a cabinet of natural history and of curios, a gallery of paintings and sculpture, a scientific laboratory, and a lecture room to which "even ladies [would be] invited to attend."⁷

The founders saw social and moral value in their proposed institution. "Young men who are surrounded by temptations" would be withdrawn from "gross relaxation and hurtful pleasures." Women, although excluded from membership, would benefit indirectly as "whatever raises the character of men has a favorable influence upon the other sex." The organizers issued a stern warning that affluence and prosperity are attended by "passion for amusement and pleasure" and that to substitute "mental occupation for sensual indulgence" is in the interests of "public and private morals."⁸

The Athenaeum was incorporated in 1807 by act of the Massachusetts General Court.⁹ It was organized as a proprietary institution with 150 shareholders buying a share of membership. Each share cost \$300.

Those in charge of the Athenaeum, from its founding to the Civil War, were aggressive collectors. Perhaps the most acquisitive was the aforementioned William Smith Shaw, who became known in Boston as "Athenaeum Shaw" because of his passionate devotion to the institution. For him, the Athenaeum was the organization "I most cherish and love."¹⁰ The squirrel-like Shaw concentrated his collecting on rare books and pamphlets and encouraged donations from notable Boston families, which included the Adamses, his relatives. He added tens of thousands of pamphlets and similar tracts to the library.

The holdings of the Athenaeum grew rapidly. In 1819, the library contained more than 12,500 volumes. Within fifty years of its founding,

the Athenaeum had become one of the five largest libraries in the nation. When Charles C. Jewett, librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, published in 1851 the first survey of libraries in the United States, he found that only five repositories had as many as 50,000 volumes. The Athenaeum was one of these. It had 50,000, the same number as the Library of Congress.¹¹

For obvious reasons, the Athenaeum's collection was exceptionally strong in colonial New England books and pamphlets. It also contained excellent folio and quarto editions of European publications dealing with law, medicine, theology, and the sciences. The Athenaeum strengthened its holdings by acquiring the libraries of a number of Boston organizations, such as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1817, the King's Chapel Library in 1823,¹² The Boston Medical Library in 1823, and the Massachusetts Scientific Association in 1826.

From 1848 to 1855, the Athenaeum gathered subscriptions from seventy Bostonians, raised \$3,800, and purchased 384 volumes of George Washington's personal library, then owned by Henry Stevens of Vermont. Previously, these books had been in the library of Bushrod Washington, the general's nephew. Many of them bore the armorial bookplate and autograph of the renowned Virginian.¹³ The bulk of his library related chiefly to agriculture and military science. As a book collector, Washington was not the polymath or bibliophile that Jefferson was.

In 1853, when the Athenaeum was forty-five years old, apostles of "progress" in Boston, headed by George Ticknor, "An Old Proprietor" and trustee of the institution, sought to disband it and make its collection the basis for the public library of the city, then in the process of formation.¹⁴ They saw no need for duplicating this collection. An acrimonious battle of words erupted among the shareholders of the Athenaeum. Some favored its dissolution and merger with the Boston Public Library. Others rose in defense of their beloved institution. The latter group was ultimately successful in this bitter internecine struggle and the Athenaeum retained its corporate existence.¹⁵

How significant are the Athenaeum's pre-Civil War holdings? In 1963, Lyman H. Butterfield, editor-in-chief of the Adams family papers, underscored the richness of the Athenaeum's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collection, much of which had been gathered prior to the Civil War, in his acknowledgements in the first two volumes of Adams family correspondence.

In editing the family letters we have drawn on the resources of a great many institutions, both nearby and at a distance. They would make so formidable a list that they cannot be named here. But a special word must be said about our almost daily use of the Boston Athenaeum. That unique institution, from

one point of view a relic and type of an age that has passed but, as we see it, an indispensable servant of modern scholarship, has not only substantial holdings of books written and owned by the Adamsses but an almost uncanny number of the books and pamphlets, in whatever languages, the Adamsses allude to in their letters and diaries. This is perhaps not surprising when one reflects that the Athenaeum is the product of the same culture that produced the Adamsses themselves and that members of the family have held shares, have read, and have written in the Athenaeum from its founding to the present day. At one time the private library of John Quincy Adams actually constituted a substantial part of the Athenaeum's holdings, and after J.Q. Adams' death Charles Francis presented his father's pamphlet collection to that institution, amounting to between six and seven thousand pieces. (C.F. Adams later availed himself of a shareholder's privilege in grumbling that the library did not stay open late enough for him to get his work done there.)¹⁶

The Athenaeum was located at four sites until the late 1840s when its officers constructed the current headquarters at 10½ Beacon Street.¹⁷ Designed by Edward Clarke Cabot, the handsome and imposing neo-Palladian structure was and *is* one of Boston's most distinctive architectural specimens. The special charm of its interior has been captured by David McCord, who described it in these words:

No other Boston institution has anything like its unique, enduring atmosphere. It combines the best elements of the Bodleian, Monticello, the frigate *Constitution*, a greenhouse, and an old New England sitting room. . . . The Athenaeum is a kind of Utopia for books: the high-ceilinged rooms, the little balconies, alcoves, nooks and angles all suggest sanctuary, escape, creature comfort. The reader, the scholar, the browser, the borrower is king. . . . The visitor to the Athenaeum will be impressed by these many things: but first of all perhaps by the view out the great sunny windows across immortality [view of the Granary Burial Grounds] to the stream of city life beyond.¹⁸

The Athenaeum is a distinctive library, Boston to the core, dedicated to the life of learning and literature. Its character is expressed in the words of Barrett Wendell, which are engraved on a tablet in the entrance hall:

*Here remains a retreat for
Those who would enjoy
The humanity of books.*

The American Antiquarian Society

The American Antiquarian Society (AAS) was the third major research library founded in the Bay State.¹⁹ It was inspired and organized by Isaiah Thomas, who became the principal printer-publisher-bookseller of the

United States in his era and "the first American capitalist of the printing business."²⁰ In underscoring Thomas's remarkable achievements as a printer, Clifford K. Shipton has written: "He spread his products over the entire nation, catered to every taste, and established himself in every field of printing. A great part of the American public learned their letters from his primers, got their news from his papers, sang from his hymnals, ordered their lives by his almanacs, and read his novels and Bibles."²¹

Thomas was born and raised in Boston. At age sixteen, he went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he worked in a newspaper shop. He learned his craft well. After a series of picaresque adventures between Maine and South Carolina, the restless young man returned to Boston in 1770 and the following year established a newspaper, *The Massachusetts Spy*. As the rhetoric for revolution increased in intensity in Massachusetts in the 1770s, Thomas joined the fray on the rebel side and lambasted the British in his newspaper.²² When hostilities appeared imminent in the spring of 1775, Thomas, fearing incarceration, packed up his press and types, ferried them across the Charles River to Charlestown, and sent them by wagon to Worcester, forty miles inland. There, he set up his press and renewed his verbal assault upon the British.

Thomas remained in Worcester for the remainder of his life (fifty-six years), operating a printing and publishing business, a paper mill, a bindery, and bookstores, and managing many parcels of real estate. The entrepreneurial Thomas became a one-man conglomeration. His various business enterprises flourished for the most part and he achieved considerable wealth. When he retired from active supervision of his business ventures, he was one of Worcester's leading citizens.

When not conducting his businesses, Thomas engaged in a myriad of cultural affairs, such as collecting books and newspapers and writing a history of printing in the United States.²³

Like Jeremy Belknap, Thomas was an ardent cultural nationalist. Believing that his generation had participated in an epochal event of world history, the creation of the United States, he sought to preserve the printed record of that remarkable episode. Because he was deeply committed to republican political values and a "self-made" man, he placed a greater emphasis on source materials produced by the "common" citizen rather than the elitist element. He was not smitten with the likes of a Thomas Jefferson, who lived like a philosopher-king on a mountain top in Virginia, or a John Adams, who was the quintessential American aristocrat.

Thomas's collecting led him to the idea of founding a research institution.²⁴ Joining forces with a small group of like-minded colleagues from Worcester and Boston, he established the AAS in 1812, while the

second war with Great Britain was raging. The AAS was incorporated by act of the Massachusetts General Court on 24 October. The first meeting was held in Boston on 19 November 1812, at the Exchange Coffee House. Thomas was elected president, a position he held until his death in 1831.

Thomas's first major consideration was the location of the AAS. He wavered between Boston and Worcester but finally chose the latter because it was a quiet inland town on the great roads leading west and south. It was also safe from the guns of foreign fleets. Thomas feared a British bombardment of Boston in retaliation for the burning of Canadian towns by the Americans. He did not wish to jeopardize his collection.²⁵

In 1819, Thomas provided \$2,000 and 150,000 bricks for the first headquarters of the AAS. He also donated the property. Before the building was completed, he gave an additional \$8,000.

Because he intended to select members from all over the nation (and world), Thomas did not regard the Massachusetts Historical Society or New-York Historical Society as competitors. In his words:

The American Antiquarian Society, is, in some respects, different from all other societies established in the United States. Membership is restricted to no state, or party. There are no members merely honorary, but all have an equal interest and concern in its affairs and the objects of this institution, whatever part of the United States they may reside in. It is truly a national institution. It has not local views nor private concerns. Its object (to collect and preserve) embrace all time, past, present and future. . . . The benefits resulting . . . will be increased by time and will be chiefly received by a remote posterity.²⁶

There is strong evidence that Thomas, like Belknap in the case of the Massachusetts Historical Society, modelled his organization after the Society of Antiquaries of London. The name he chose was similar to that of the London institution, and the title of his first publication, *Archaeologia Americana* (1820), was an obvious derivation from *Archaeologia*, which the London body had been publishing since 1770. Thomas's work was the most important publication on American archaeology to that time.²⁷

The stated purpose of the AAS was to "encourage the collection and preservation of the Antiquities of our country, and of curious and valuable productions in Art and Nature [that] have a tendency to enlarge the sphere of human knowledge." The Thomas group also wished to promote the use of such collections in order "to perpetuate the history of moral and political events, and to improve and interest posterity."²⁸

What distinguished Thomas from most of his contemporaries as a collector was his concentration on the origins of the New World. He had no interest in the classical antiquity of Europe. The ancient history of

Greece, Rome, or Great Britain was not on his menu. The Western Hemisphere captured his attention and especially his native land. His library was to be an American library and a library of the people. As Marcus A. McCorison has written: "A participant in political revolution, Thomas would establish a library on revolutionary principles, one preserving democratic literature and the written materials of a culture in which all sorts of ideas freely circulate and from which precipitate new ideas of the true and the beautiful. . . . Thus the library and field of inquiry established by Isaiah Thomas constituted a pioneering departure from the norm and reflected his own essentially secular, non-academic, and proletarian background."²⁹

While paying attention to every branch of human knowledge, Thomas concentrated on American antiquities for, as he expressed it, the "study of Antiquity offers to the curious and inquisitive a large field for research, for sublime reflection, and for amusement. Those who make collections in this branch of science, furnish the historian with his best materials, while he distinguishes from truth the fictions of a bold invention, and ascertains the credibility of the facts; and to the philosopher he presents a faithful source of ingenious speculation; while he points out to him the way of thinking, and the manners of men, under all the varieties of aspect in which they have appeared."³⁰

With respect to the types of material the AAS should collect, Thomas specified "books of every description, including pamphlets and magazines, especially those which were early printed either in South or in North America; files of Newspapers of former times, or of the present day, are particularly desirable. . . . Manuscripts, ancient and modern, on interesting subjects, particularly those which give accounts of remarkable events, discoveries, or the description of any part of the continent, or the islands in the American seas; maps, charts, etc." Thomas implored his colleagues to look for those "numberless old books, newspapers and magazines, and many relicks of antiquity, crowded together in garrets and store houses, of no use to any one, and hastening to destruction by means of the weather and vermin."³¹

Thomas established a solid base for his society. In 1813, he donated to it his large, private collection of books, approximately 18,000 volumes, much of which he accumulated while compiling his magisterial, two-volume *History of Printing in America*.³² Thomas expected every member to donate articles of value to the collections at least once a year. He also provided funds for the construction of the society's first headquarters, Antiquarian Hall, in 1820. When he died in 1831, he left a sizable bequest to the society, thereby assuring the continuity of his cherished institution.³³

From 1812 to 1817, the AAS closely coordinated its selection of members with the collecting of "antiquities." It purposely sought men of learning from the principal cities of the nation and instructed them to solicit materials, through newspaper advertisements, and send them to Worcester. These members were designated "receiving officers." Some of these agents, like Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York City, were diligent, aggressive collectors, while others were passive non-contributors.

The receiver in Portland, Maine, was of the former category. He acquired and sent to Worcester an ax of French manufacture, which had been uncovered six feet below the ground. The donor of this artifact also had sent along a natural history specimen that was alongside the ax, "a toad, in a state of motionless insensibility, but which recovered activity after about an hour's exposure to air." Exercising wise judgment, the receiver sent only the ax to the AAS.³⁴

One of the Society's more sensational acquisitions was the "Mammoth Cave Mummy" which was discovered about 1814 in Kentucky by workmen digging for saltpeter and taken to Lexington where it became "the subject of great curiosity." Problems ensued. Because of exposure to the atmosphere, the mummy "gradually began to decay; its muscles to contract, and the teeth to drop out, and much of its hair was plucked from its head by wanton visitants." The owner gave it to the AAS's Kentucky receiver, Nahum Ward, for shipment to Worcester, but Ward, an opportunistic entrepreneur, decided to travel around the country with the artifact and exhibit it to gaping crowds for a fee. He touted it as "one of the greatest curiosities ever exhibited in the American world."

The AAS eventually recovered the mummy and featured it in its cabinet. President Thomas, however, was not enamored by this aboriginal remain. He wrote:

Very few persons attend to see the skeleton; as those who do, universally express their disgust at it. For myself, I cannot perceive how the cause of science, history, or antiquarianism is to be benefitted by the preservation of those dried up particles. I have seen a dead cat, which accidentally was inclosed in an oven, and found some months afterwards, in as good a state of mummy preservation as this skeleton. The best thing in my opinion which could be done with it would be to give it to some anatomical school or bury it in the cemetery.³⁵

After 1817, the AAS turned to a system of regional receivers, which was based upon geographical representation on its Council. Again, the results were mixed.

From Thomas's death to the Civil War, two other remarkable librarians held forth at the Antiquarian Society: Christopher Columbus

Baldwin and Samuel Foster Haven. They were also keepers of the past *par excellence*.

Baldwin had brief careers as a lawyer and journalist before turning to his real love, librarianship. A Harvard graduate (1823), he served as volunteer librarian and cabinet keeper of the AAS from 1827 to 1830 and from 1832 to 1835 he was paid an annual salary of \$600. He had definite ideas on what the institution should collect. After visiting the New-York Historical Society in 1833, he wrote:

There were very few objects of curiosity or antiquity in the collection. This is correct taste. A library should contain nothing but books, coins, statuary and pictures. I admit now and then that an antiquity should be admitted. But how absurd to pile up old bureaus and chests, and stuff them with old coats and hats and high-heeled shoes! The true history of all these things are handed down by painting. And besides, if they are once received, there will be attempts making to gull somebody with the 'Shield of Achilles'. . . . I have discouraged the sending them to the Antiquarian Hall for this reason.³⁶

One of Baldwin's principal objectives, as he noted in his diary on 10 July 1832, was to develop a major newspaper collection. He added considerably to Thomas's prior acquisitions:

This day I have shelves erected in the chamber of the north wing of Antiquarian Hall for the reception of newspapers. The shelves are put up, and I load them with six hundred volumes of papers, which comprise about half of our collection of that kind of reading.

It is one of the chief sources of my trouble (being happy enough in all other respects) that only a part of the members of the Council of the Society are willing to increase the numbers of our newspapers. Since I have been here, I have been unwearied in my pains to get good files of papers from all parts of the country. I have made arrangements with some forty or fifty individuals from different sections of the U.S. to procure for me ancient as well as modern sets and to preserve all those that they now subscribe for. In this way the collection must become exceedingly valuable. I suffer no traveller to visit me without enlisting him in my cause, and giving him directions how to find them and how to send them to me. Though I may fail of getting as many as I wish, I am sure that I shall entitle myself to the gratitude of future antiquaries.³⁷

For the period from 1820 to 1865, as Clifford K. Shipton has reported, the AAS's collection of newspapers was as strong as that of the Library of Congress.³⁸ Baldwin deserves credit for this achievement.

Baldwin developed an unbounded love for the AAS. His was a total commitment, as reflected by these two entries in his diary:

March 17, 1834—I set out, in front of the Antiquarian Hall, ten locust trees, which I procured from the nursery of William Lincoln. I brought them on my back at two loads. . . . I have set out all the trees that are now growing about the hall. I had the help of two men one day and they planted so badly that I have been compelled to pull up what they put down and supply others in their place. I began the planting of them in November, 1832, but the greatest part of them was planted in March and April, 1833.

April 19, 1834—Anniversary of the battle of Lexington. I drank a glass of wine by myself in commemoration of the event, and spent the afternoon in planting trees about the Antiquarian Hall. I have now planted all I designed to in the beginning. I have set out, perhaps, five hundred of different kinds. I have dug them up in the woods and brought them on my back without the assistance of even a boy, except about two days' work of one man, and he was engaged a part of the time in other business. They will afford a comfortable shade for my successor, if I should not live to enjoy it myself.³⁹

Few, if any, modern chief executive officers of a cultural institution would "stoop so low" as to plant trees on their property.

If Baldwin had a passion for planting trees, he had even a greater zeal for collecting materials for his library. While he had a relatively brief career at the society, he was remarkably successful in augmenting its holdings. His most significant single acquisition, without question, was the Thomas Wallcut collection.

A founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Wallcut (1758-1840) was a strange man.⁴⁰ A lifelong bachelor, he settled in Boston and worked as a State House clerk and researcher-editor. He lived with his mother, who ran an elementary school, and became reclusive and eccentric as he grew older. After the death of his aged mother, his mental disintegration accelerated. He began to sit in the pew reserved for blacks in his church and wandered through the streets of Boston talking to himself. He spent the last years of his life in an asylum for the insane.

Despite his eccentric behavior, Wallcut was a dedicated and discriminating acquirer of Americana for all of his adult life. He amassed an enormous collection over the years, primarily books and pamphlets. Some of these items he procured from his uncle.

In 1834, Baldwin decided to visit Wallcut in Boston to see if he could persuade him to donate his material to the Antiquarian Society. Baldwin described what happened in his diary:

Aug. 2, 1834—I called on Mr. Walcott this morning, who lives in Columbia Street, and he went with me to India Street where the pamphlets, &c., of his uncle were deposited. They were in the fourth story of an oil store kept by C. W. Cartwright & Son, where they had been placed about four months ago. They were put in ancient trunks, bureaux, and chests, baskets, tea chests and

old drawers, and presented a very odd appearance. The extent of them was altogether beyond my expectations. Mr. Walcott told me that I might take all the pamphlets and newspapers I could find and all books that treated of American history, and that I might make use of any of the boxes containing them. I went immediately to work to putting them in order for transporting to Worcester. Every thing was covered with venerable dust, and as I was under a slated roof and the thermometer at ninety-three, I had a pretty hot time of it. Nothing but a love of such work could inspire any man to labor in such a place. The value of the rarities I found, however, soon made me forget the heat, and I have never seen such happy moments. Every thing I opened discovered to my eyes some unexpected treasure. Great numbers of the productions of our early authors were turned up at every turn. I could hardly persuade myself that it was not all a dream, and I applied myself with all industry to packing, lest capricious fortune should snatch something from my hands. I worked from 8 in the morning until half past two in a heat and dust and stench of oil that would have been intolerable in any other circumstances. When I came out to go to dinner I could but just crawl. Yet at three o'clock, I returned to it again and labored until night.⁴¹

Baldwin observed the sabbath but on Monday morning he was awake at 4 A.M., although he could not gain access to the garret until 7 A.M., when he renewed his task "with fresh fury." He worked in the heat for seven consecutive hours; the temperature was in the 90s. He also spent all of Tuesday and Wednesday in his historical treasure land. On Thursday he loaded two-and-a-quarter tons (4,476 pounds) of books, pamphlets, and manuscripts onto a wagon, which then rumbled off to Worcester.⁴² As Walter M. Whitehill has written, "it was an imposing sight, equal in dimension to a load of hay."⁴³ The Wallcut collection was one of the most important collections of Americana acquired by the AAS in the pre-Civil War period.⁴⁴

Strangely, the AAS Council failed to acknowledge Baldwin's stellar achievement and the librarian was peeved by this slight. As he noted in his diary:

. . . I was amazed to find that instead of thanks for my pains in the acquisition, I was like to receive quite a different sort of entertainment. They did not so much as utter a single note of gratitude. . . . But I am sensible that some person, from hostility to me, had represented to the Council that the donation was of small value. It was some comfort to me to know that no one knew so much of their worth as I did myself, for no one had examined them. I had the horrors for a few days, but ultimately recovered.⁴⁵

The Wallcut material was Baldwin's final coup as a collector. One year later, at the age of thirty-five, he came to an untimely death. He was killed in a stagecoach accident near Norwich, Ohio, where he had gone to

investigate the burial sites of the mysterious mound builders, ancient aboriginal inhabitants of the region. Baldwin intended to collect some Indian skulls for the AAS cabinet.

Samuel Foster Haven succeeded Baldwin and held forth as librarian for the next forty-three years, until his retirement in 1881. He, too, substantially increased the holdings of the library. In 1843, it contained 16,000 volumes and in 1859 more than 27,000. Haven was also an active collector of antiquities, in keeping with his deepseated interest in anthropology. As the impish Clifford K. Shipton has written: ". . . he did not have the ability which a good museum man, like a good woman, should have of saying 'No.'"⁴⁶

Haven was responsible for one egregious blunder as a collector. In September 1840 a young artist from the West came to the AAS unannounced, bearing a letter of introduction from George Parkman of Boston. The artist wished to sell a set of his paintings of birds which were contained in a volume. Haven was busy and could not see the young man. An employee told the visitor to return in the afternoon. He did so and learned that Haven had departed for the day and the library was closed. John James Audubon then left Worcester with his soon-to-be famous *Birds of America* under hand.⁴⁷

Among special collections, exclusive of rare books and newspapers, the AAS has the largest collection of early American broadsides and almanacs in the nation. Both are prime historical sources, although the almanac held a special value because it was "a necessity to farmers, navigators, householders, townspeople, the gentry, the professional class, and even to scholars."⁴⁸ The AAS's collection, numbering over 24,000 pieces, is the largest in existence and comprises fully ninety percent of the almanacs printed in the United States before 1850. The society's collection of Latin American and Canadian almanacs is also the strongest in the nation.

The AAS also possesses a significant "association" collection, the Mather library. Built up by four of the most learned of early Anglo-Americans—Richard, Increase, Cotton, and Samuel Mather—it was the largest private library in the colonies during the colonial period, numbering between 600 and 700 volumes.⁴⁹ Thomas purchased the collection in 1816 and packed it for shipment to Worcester. Later, he helped to catalogue it. This collection, together with the Mather family manuscripts, has led to the AAS being called "the Mather shrine."⁵⁰

While the AAS acquired a stunning array of prime historical materials in the early nineteenth century, it also accumulated an assortment of three-dimensional artifacts, from a copy of Michelangelo's colossal statue of Moses to a plaster reproduction of the temple at Labna. Baldwin was on

record as stating that it was absurd "to pile up old bureaus and chests, and stuff them with old coats and hats and high-heeled shoes," but this did not staunch the flow of historical curiosities and oddments, some of which he had acquired. In time, the AAS would divest itself of much of this material, retaining only prize artifacts to appoint its headquarters, but, to the time of the Civil War, these items were an integral part of the collection.

By 1861, the AAS was one of the nation's premier centers of research for the study of American history. It had fulfilled Isaiah Thomas's prophecy that "age will increase its utility."⁵¹

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Athenaeum, and the American Antiquarian Society had the largest and most imposing historical collections in the Bay State in 1861 but, as Charles C. Jewett noted in his survey of American libraries (in 1851), there were numerous other institutions in Massachusetts with impressive holdings, such as Harvard University, the Library of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Boston Library, and the Library of the General Court.⁵² With all of these available resources, there is little wonder that Massachusetts became the focus of historiographical attention and produced the bulk of America's historians in the nineteenth century. As George S. Ellis wrote in 1855:

The truth is Massachusetts has always been remarkable for the number of its chroniclers, annalists and historical contributors. It is the only state in the Union which possesses elaborate histories contemporaneous in their authorship with all the epochs and incidents through which it has passed in two centuries and nearly a half. One is amazed to notice how large a proportion of all our existing literature of native production is historical—and how uniformly it is spread over all the years that lie between us and the beginnings of things here. Diaries, journals, and letter-books and pamphlets—sprinkled in between such books as Mather's, Hutchinson and Minor's Histories—afford us rich materials which leave but few gaps in our ancient records. From the beginning it is plain that Massachusetts was intended to have a History—and not a day has been passed by white men on this soil on which the pen has not recorded some event, experience or fact that has since been gathered by the annalist.⁵³

Massachusetts was a congenial home to Clio.⁵⁴

ENDNOTES

1. My account of Jeremy Belknap's career and the founding of the The Massachusetts Historical Society is extracted from Louis Leonard Tucker, *Clio's Consort: Jeremy Belknap and the Founding of The Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990). Statements and quotations not otherwise documented are derived from this work.
2. The reports of the librarian were published in the Society's *Proceedings*.
3. Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, 1st series, I (1791-1835): 200-203.
4. For the early history of the Boston Athenaeum, see: Josiah Quincy, *The History of the Boston Athenaeum* (Cambridge: Metcalf & Co., 1851); Charles K. Bolton, ed., *The Athenaeum Centenary: The Influence and History of the Boston Athenaeum From 1807 to 1907* ([Boston]: Boston Athenaeum, 1907), pp. 15-56.
5. Jane S. Knowles, "Changing Images of the Boston Athenaeum," *Change and Continuity: A Pictorial History of the Boston Athenaeum* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1976), p. 6.
6. Quincy, *History of the Athenaeum*, p. 12.
7. Knowles, "Changing Images," *Pictorial History of Athenaeum*, p. 6.
8. Knowles, "Changing Images," *Pictorial History of Athenaeum*, p. 6.
9. Quincy, *History of Athenaeum*, pp. 18-22.
10. Bolton, ed., *Athenaeum Centenary*, p. 26.
11. The other three were: Harvard University with 84,200 volumes; Yale University with 50,481 volumes; and the Library Company of Philadelphia, with 60,000 volumes. Jewett, *Notices of Public Libraries in the United States of America* (Washington: Printed for the House of Representatives, 1851), *passim*. Jewett wrote of the Athenaeum: "The library is hardly surpassed, either in size or in value, by any other in the country; and its regulations are framed with the design that it shall answer the highest purposes of a public library." p. 22. The Athenaeum is discussed on pp. 19-23.
12. King William III of England sent this library to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1698. It contained 200 seventeenth-century histories and ecclesiastical works. See Walter M. Whitehill, "The King's Chapel Library," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 38 (1947-1951): 274-289.
13. Bolton, ed., *Athenaeum Centenary*, p. 42. This was one-third of Washington's original collection. See Appleton P.C. Griffin and William Coolidge Lane, *A Catalogue of the Washington Collection in the Boston Athenaeum* (Cambridge: University Press, 1897).

14. The Legislature passed the enabling act for the library in 1848 and organization came in 1852. On the early history of the library, see Walter M. Whitehill, *Boston Public Library: A Centennial History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 1-42. Ticknor was a professor of French and Spanish languages at Harvard University.
15. Bolton, ed., *Athenaeum Centenary*, pp. 44-47; Whitehill, *History of Boston Public Library*, pp. 38-40.
16. Lyman H. Butterfield, et al., eds., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963-), vol. 1, p. li.
17. For photos of the Athenaeum's early homes and the Cabot structure, see *Pictorial History of Athenaeum, passim*.
18. Quoted in Walter M. Whitehill, *A Boston Athenaeum Anthology 1807-1972* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1973), pp. 15-16.
19. On the early history of the American Antiquarian Society, see: Walter M. Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies* ([Boston]: Boston Athenaeum, 1962), pp. 65-87; Clifford K. Shipton, "The American Antiquarian Society," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 2 (1945): 164-172; Charles G. Washburn, "Historical Address," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 1812-1849*, 2nd series, 22 (1912): 257-292.
20. There are numerous writings about Thomas. Of special value for this essay were: Clifford K. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas: Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist, 1749-1831* (Rochester, NY: The Printing House of Leo Hart, 1948); Annie Russell Marble, *From 'Prentice to Patron: The Life Story of Isaiah Thomas* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935); *The Diary of Isaiah Thomas 1805-1828*, edited with an introduction and notes by Benjamin Thomas Hill, *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society*, vols. IX and X (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1909), vol. 1, pp. iii-xiv.
21. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas*, p. 1.
22. Thomas vacillated at the outset but then cast his lot with the Whigs.
23. Isaiah Thomas, *History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers, and an Account of Newspapers*, 2 vols. (Worcester: From the Press of Isaiah Thomas, 1810).
24. Marble asserted that the father of George Bancroft, the renowned American historian, was "among the first advisers who encouraged Isaiah Thomas to carry out his project for a new historical society which should be national—even, in time, international—in its membership and resources." *From 'Prentice to Patron*, p. 292.
25. Thomas wrote: "For the better preservation from the destruction so often experienced in large towns and cities by fire, as well as from the ravages of any enemy, to which seaports in particular are so much exposed in time of war, it is universally agreed that for a place of deposit for articles intended to be preserved for ages, and of which many, if destroyed or carried away, could never be replaced by others of the like kind, an inland

situation is to be preferred; this consideration alone was judged sufficient for placing the Library and Museum of this Society forty miles distant from the nearest branch of the sea, in the town of Worcester, Massachusetts." Quoted in Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 67.

26. Quoted in Shipton, "The Museum of the American Antiquarian Society," Walter M. Whitehill, ed., *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 40-41.

27. Isaiah Thomas, "An Account of the American Antiquarian Society," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 1812-1849* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1912), p. 16; Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 68.

28. Isaiah Thomas, "An Account of the American Antiquarian Society," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 1812-1849* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1912), p. 16; Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 68.

29. "Isaiah Thomas, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Future," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 2nd series, part 1, 91 (April, 1981): 32-33.

30. "Isaiah Thomas, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Future," pp. 32-33. Thomas, "American Antiquarian Society," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 1812-1849*, p. 17.

31. McCorison, "Thomas, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Future," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, p. 32.

32. Until 1820, when Antiquarian Hall was built, Thomas's collection remained in his "mansion house," his print shop, and in a store room in Worcester.

33. He left \$30,000, plus land for adding two wings, and \$12,000 to pay for a librarian and cabinet-keeper.

34. Shipton, "Antiquarian Society," *William and Mary Quarterly*, p. 37.

35. Shipton, "Antiquarian Society," pp. 38-39. See also, Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, pp. 69-70. The "exsiccated Kentucky Indian" was exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, then was donated to the Smithsonian Institution.

36. *Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1901), p. 224.

37. *Diary of Baldwin*, pp. 188-189.

38. Shipton, "Antiquarian Society," *William and Mary Quarterly*, p. 167.

39. *Diary of Baldwin*, pp. 291-292.

40. For a memoir of Wallcut, see Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings* 2 (1835-1855): 193-208.
41. *Diary of Baldwin*, pp. 317-318.
42. *Diary of Baldwin*, pp. 320-323.
43. Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 74.
44. Wallcut did not donate his entire collection to the American Antiquarian Society. He gave some of his books to the Massachusetts Historical Society and another segment ended up at Bowdoin College after a brief stay at the Dartmouth College Library.
45. *Diary of Baldwin*, p. 326.
46. Whitehill, ed., *Five Episodes in American Museums*, p. 42.
47. *Collections and Programs of Antiquarian Society*, p. 21. The Society is still without a set of Audubon's famous "elephant" edition.
48. *Collections and Programs of Antiquarian Society*, p. 44.
49. Many volumes had disappeared in earlier years.
50. Shipton, "Antiquarian Society," *William and Mary Quarterly*, pp. 170-171. See also *Collections and Programs of Antiquarian Society*, pp. 99-104; *Diary of Thomas*, vol. 1, p. 253 and note on pp. 253-254.
51. Quoted in Marble, *From 'Prentice to Patron*, p. 300.
52. *Notices of Public Libraries*, pp. 17-48.
53. Ellis to Rev. Samuel Osgood (New-York Historical Society, Domestic Corresponding Secretary), 27 April 1855 (New-York Historical Society manuscript collections).
54. *Editor's note*: In addition to statewide organizations founded in Massachusetts in the antebellum era, Leslie W. Dunlap in his *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* (Madison, WI: Privately printed by Cranford Printing Co., 1944), pp. 168-172, describes the Essex Historical Society, 1821; Worcester County Historical Society, 1831; Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society, 1843; Old Colony Historical Society, 1853; and Dedham Historical Society, 1859.

Other New England States: Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont

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The Massachusetts Historical Society had been in existence for nearly thirty years before the five remaining New England states took steps to organize state historical societies. Four states organized societies in the early 1820s—Maine and Rhode Island in 1822, New Hampshire in 1823, Connecticut in 1825—and fifteen years later, Vermont in 1839. Actually, Connecticut's efforts were premature. When two of the key organizers left the state, the society became inactive; it was not revived until 1839.

The men who founded these historical organizations were strikingly like-minded. Most were relatively young, in their thirties and forties, well-educated, and prominent in their community, whether it be in law, politics, education, the clergy, agriculture, or commerce. Their family histories reached back to the colonial period. Family members had fought in the American Revolution, and they took great pride in this fact. Members of repatriated Tory families were also represented. All had a sense of history and a sense of place. They knew the importance of gathering historical records in order that their own and future generations would be able to write about it. Quite a number were respectable historians and collectors.

What is significant about the five state historical societies these like-minded men founded was that in a short time-period, each had built a relatively stable organization. Each had managed to gather and preserve respectable collections of primary source materials, for which the nation, and historians in particular, are forever indebted to them. Each had

published a modest list of historical documents and histories. Their programs and activities early identified them as the statewide custodians of historical records, and the cultural centers for commemorating and celebrating past events of their local, state, and national heritage. A few had managed to acquire their own building, and although their financial health was never robust, some even had acquired very modest endowments. The stability gained in these formative years provided the foundation for the great growth and importance these repositories achieved in the second half of the nineteenth century. Also, significantly, these historical societies had early developed an institutional character that remained virtually unchanged for over one hundred years—their membership patterns, their control and domination by Anglo-Americans (which of course was the dominant culture in the land), their administrative practices, their collecting and publishing patterns, and their program activities.

What motivated the like-minded citizens in each of these five states to organize societies in the 1820s is not difficult to fathom. Prototype organizations already existed in Massachusetts and New York, and the achievements of these societies were well-known to them. State pride, nurtured by more than 150 years of colonial experience, virtually demanded that they do likewise. The pending visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to the United States in 1824 did a great deal to revive interest in the American Revolution and the young nation's past. Publications like Jeremy Belknap's *American Biography* (1794) and John Eliot's *Dictionary of American Biography* (1809) stirred interest in American Revolutionary war heroes and the Founding Fathers. As the fiftieth anniversary of the American Revolution approached, some Americans were concerned that the participants in that cataclysmic event were passing from the scene without leaving a permanent account of their role in the war. Historical organizations, they felt, were the vehicles for preserving and disseminating the story.¹

Some local historians felt that the role their state played in the American Revolution was not being sufficiently credited in the national histories currently being published, and that organizing a state society would serve to correct this understatement. In an address before the Vermont Historical Society, Norwich College history professor James D. Butler maintained that Vermont's contributions were being ignored. "Her heroes and people are not getting the credit they rightfully deserve . . . because her exploits are so blended with those of the continentals, or so imperfectly detailed, as to lose all individuality."² Rhode Islanders were openly critical of the Puritan historians of Massachusetts, who they felt seemed to be writing the nation's history solely from their own point of

view.³ Still others felt that the earlier established Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society would acquire local records that ought properly to remain in their own state.

Aside from these provincial attitudes, there was universal concern that valuable records were being lost or destroyed because historical societies had not been organized to collect and preserve them.⁴ Organizers of the Rhode Island Historical Society stressed the loss of significant collections from accidental fires or were thrown out simply because later generations failed to understand their importance. The papers of state Chief Justice Daniel Owen, who had presided over the convention that ratified the Constitution in 1790, were lost in this manner. The papers of another Revolutionary War hero, Captain Daniel Singer Dexter, were burned because a descendant wanted the trunk in which they were kept.⁵ The rationales for organizing state repositories for historical records were many and remarkably similar in each of the five states.

The charters of incorporation of these five state societies also had many similarities. They probably freely adapted this information from one another. Each was incorporated by its state legislature as a private corporation with a limited membership and listed the offices that were to be filled. The date of the annual meeting of the corporation was generally listed. The corporate statements of purpose, with some variation, were virtually alike. Rhode Island: "procuring and preserving whatever relates to the topography, antiquities, and natural, civil, and ecclesiastical history of the state." Connecticut: ". . . whatever may relate to the civil, ecclesiastical and natural history of the United States, and especially the State of Connecticut." Maine: ". . . to collect and preserve, as far as the state of their funds will admit, whatever in their opinion, may tend to explain and illustrate any department of civil, ecclesiastical and natural history, especially of this state, and of the United States." New Hampshire: ". . . Topographical, Historical, and Biographical, relating principally to New Hampshire." Vermont: ". . . for the purpose of collecting and preserving materials for the civil and natural history of Vermont." Whereas the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New-York Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society aggressively collected and preserved materials of national significance in accordance with goals written in their charters, the five newer New England societies placed their primary interest on their own state and local history. Ecclesiastical history was always mentioned, indicating the important role ministers and religion played in the early republic. Natural history, a term that tended to cover geological, archaeological, and ethnological materials, was also a specified category. The charters of Maine, Rhode Island, and Connecticut did list United States

history as a collecting objective, and each did gather some collections of national significance but never to the extent of the earlier mentioned societies. Except for New Hampshire, which listed biographical materials as a collecting objective, no mention is made of genealogy, notwithstanding the fact that the history of first families and of prominent citizens was always a primary collecting goal.

Even though all five of the societies were incorporated as private organizations, it is interesting to note the support and encouragement each received from their state legislature. Assistance sometimes came in the form of a direct appropriation (be it small, or as in the case of Maine, rather substantial), use of some space in the state capitol building as a meeting place or exhibit and storage area, an occasional special appropriation for cataloging, and, in some instances, assistance in joint publishing ventures. However, this support and encouragement never developed into the concept of a state-administered institution, which became the norm in the midwest at the end of our period of study. New Englanders did not favor such an arrangement. An exception was Henry Barnard, the progressive educator for Connecticut, but his view was in the minority, and his compatriots at the Connecticut Historical Society made it quite clear that they wished their society to "remain a private association of gentlemen who shared historical interests."⁶ In New England, this characteristic attitude prevailed. The only exception was Vermont, where a set of circumstances eventually resulted in making the society a state agency, but this development came after 1860.

Distributing published circulars enumerating the research materials the new societies were seeking was the common method for explaining to the public what kinds of books, documents, letters, newspapers, and other information these societies intended to gather. Some of the early "want lists" were comprehensive, and as such, accurately describe the present-day holdings of these special research collections. The New Hampshire Historical Society's list, published in 1823 together with the society's act of incorporation, constitution, and bylaws, is an exceptional example.⁷ It requested information about early settlements and settlers, Indians (including their social customs, language, and captivity accounts), topographical and geographical descriptions of towns, establishment of churches and schools, New Hampshire imprints (books and pamphlets), records of town meetings, commemorative events, militia companies, minutes of political clubs, journals, laws, resolves, protests of Congress, assemblies, conventions and other legislative bodies, proclamations of authority, proceedings of ecclesiastical conventions, and even statistics on mortality. States that succeeded in accumulating research materials in all

of these categories did, over a period of time, build a substantive state and local history collection.

Another early New Hampshire publication carefully prescribed a set of rules and regulations governing the management of the society and its collections, and by so doing, provided an insight into early historical society management procedures.⁸ Some have remained in use up to the present. Gifts to the library or museum had to be properly acknowledged and cataloged. Society book plates were pasted on the inside cover of all books. Pamphlets were bound (a practice that came in disfavor in the mid-twentieth century). Some materials, like newspapers and maps, did not circulate. Manuscripts could be loaned to members of the publishing committee, but this practice also came in disfavor when incidents of mysterious disappearance surfaced. The society librarian had the lion's share of responsibility for keeping records, but standing committees were also assigned special tasks, such as preservation and binding, publishing, finance, appraising gifts, and arranging for the annual meeting.

Initially, all state societies limited their membership, but some saw this restriction as a hindrance to growth. In time, bylaws were amended to expand the membership base. The New Hampshire and Vermont historical societies subsequently eliminated the restriction entirely and opened their membership to all. However, screening committees made certain that those proposed had interests and social position compatible with the other members of the organization. In keeping with the prevailing custom of the day, women were excluded from membership, but as guests were allowed to attend the annual meeting and other special events. New members were expected to pay a modest initiation fee (generally one to five dollars) and annual dues ranging from one to three dollars a year. Societies were empowered to levy assessments for meeting operating expenses. Funds for special projects were raised on a volunteer basis, and fortunate was the society that had affluent members who could be called upon to make up deficits.

The Maine Historical Society

The five New England societies may have had similar organizational features and goals and objectives, but individually, each had its own distinctive history. Few were launched under more auspicious circumstances than the Maine Historical Society. The "District of Maine" was part of Massachusetts until the controversial Congressional compromise of 1820 permitted Maine to become the twentieth state in the Union. With statehood, the legislature moved quickly to support educational facilities as

one means for attracting new settlers. In 1820 the first state legislature provided Bowdoin College a generous grant, and it also established a medical school at Waterville. In 1822 the Maine legislature took only two days to pass an act to incorporate the Maine Historical Society. Swift passage of the act could be attributed to the fact that the forty-nine gentlemen listed as incorporators included Governor Albion K. Parris and Bowdoin College president William Allen, together with other prominent citizens such as Prentiss Mellen, William K. Preble, Edward Payson, Joshua Wingate, Stephen Longfellow, Jr., and Robert Hallowell Gardiner. The list included capitalists, large landowners, entrepreneurs, lawyers, educators, ministers, and politicians. They were young men, mostly in their twenties and thirties, whose families had also fought in the Revolution.⁹

The act of incorporation limited membership to one hundred and provided that the society's annual meeting should be held at Bowdoin College in Brunswick. However, the society's first meeting, held at Portland on 11 April 1822, was primarily an organizational meeting at which officers were elected and committees were appointed. A report of the meeting appeared in the *Portland Argus*, 16 April 1822, and included this modest request: "Gentlemen in possession of books, pamphlets and manuscripts who are disposed to place them in a situation to be useful to the future historian, are invited to send them to the librarian [Reverend Edward Payson]."

What distinguished the Maine Historical Society from the other five in this study was its close connection with Bowdoin College, an association that undoubtedly had many advantages—but some disadvantages as well. Having lent his considerable prestige and support to the founding of the society, Governor Parris retired from the office after one year. From 1823 to 1828, William Allen, president of Bowdoin College, took on the responsibility. A Harvard graduate (1802), he published in 1809 an *American Biographical and Historical Dictionary*. The 1837 edition of this work contained over 7,000 biographical sketches. Productive and undoubtedly busy as he was in compiling his compendium, he was singularly unproductive when it came to the development of the historical society. Perhaps he expected Bowdoin College professor Parker Cleveland, who held the office of society librarian, to assume this role. Whatever, little was accomplished.

The turning point came in 1828 when the Reverend Ichabod Nichols, the learned minister of the First Parish Church of Portland, replaced Allen as society president. In the same year, the society amended its act of incorporation to remove the requirement that the annual meeting be held on the Bowdoin College campus in Brunswick. Thereafter, the

society was free to hold meetings "at such times and such places as they may think proper." Notwithstanding these changes, the society continued to have a close association with Bowdoin in these formative years. It held many of its annual meetings at the college, and several of its professors were elected officers.¹⁰

The new president, Reverend Ichabod Nichols, had a simple solution for strengthening the society and attracting a broader base of members: schedule meetings outside the Brunswick area and start a publications program. For the next thirty years society meetings followed a standard format: papers on a variety of state and local history topics were presented at day-long and evening sessions, interspersed with socializing and partaking of food and refreshments. Outings to historic sites also proved popular.

Formal papers generated at these sessions were published in the *Maine Historical Collections* when funds were available. The first volume appeared in 1831. Sixteen years were to pass before the second appeared. Four more were published in the 1850s. This accelerated publishing program was made possible by a new source of revenue. In 1849 the society had judiciously petitioned the state legislature for funds and received a land grant of half a township, which it then sold for \$6,000. The income from this permanent fund (i.e., endowment) was partly used for publications. Clearly, the society had at last achieved recognition as an important cultural and educational institution. It, in turn, was the catalyst for generating widespread interest in Maine's history.

The historians whose writings were published in the *Maine Historical Collections* were mostly college-educated, with a keen interest in state and local history. Their primary sources were limited and their critical analysis and interpretation may be found wanting, but their output provided rich source material for future historians. In some instances their publications have stood up surprisingly well. William Willis' *History of Portland from its First Settlement with Notices of the Neighboring Towns and the Changes of Government in Maine*, which was published in the first volume of the Maine collections in 1831, is considered by one historian as the "best standard history within its chronological limits."¹¹ The same volume also contained a sample of the important documentary material historical societies regularly published: viz., petitions of the inhabitants of Maine to Cromwell and Charles II, and the original letters of Benedict Arnold, written in 1775 while on his expedition through Maine. Bowdoin College president William Allen wrote a brief history of the Arnold expedition to accompany the letters.

Maine is the largest New England state. In the antebellum period, when the Maine society was being organized, the remote distances between

towns and settlements and severe winters discouraged travel. Yet, separation from Massachusetts and statehood kindled a great pride in her leading citizens. Establishing a cultural organization like the state historical society was a step toward placing Maine on parity with her New England neighbors.

The Rhode Island Historical Society

Rhode Island, the smallest of the New England states, organized a state society on 19 April 1822, the seventy-seventh anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The initial meeting took place at No. 3 North Main Street, Providence, in the law offices of two key organizers, justice of the peace William Aplin and attorney William R. Staples. The state legislature approved incorporation papers in the following year, 29 June 1823. The legislature also appropriated \$500 to assist the founders in carrying out their stated objectives of "procuring and preserving whatever relates to the topography, antiquities, and natural, civil and ecclesiastical history of the state." This modest appropriation was perhaps the first state appropriation to any historical society. The twelve incorporators¹² were young professionals and business men, a majority of whom came from families whose roots reached far into the history of the colony and the state. The state legislature further assisted the fledgling society by allowing its members to hold their meetings in the senate chamber of the State House, and to keep their collections on one side of that room in cases furnished by the Providence Library Company.

For the first twelve years of its existence (1822-34) the arrangement worked well, but collecting efforts were so successful that soon additional space was needed. The banking firm of Brown and Ives offered space in their brick building on South Main Street, and two years later another member, Cyrus Butler, offered rent-free space in the upper story of the Arcade Building.¹³ Although access was difficult and conditions were crowded, the society kept its records in Room 53 of that building for eight years.

These arrangements had to make do until the society could build a permanent home. Steps toward achieving this ambitious objective began in 1830 when the heirs of the late Nathan Waterman¹⁴ gave the society a contingent interest in a lot at the corner of Waterman and Benefit streets. The society arranged to sell this interest back to the Waterman family in return for buying another lot on Waterman Street for \$750. With a potential building site in hand, the society launched a fund drive to build a permanent home. To raise money, in 1837 the society obtained

permission from the state legislature to run a lottery (a common practice of the times). Their efforts raised \$3,000, but it was short of their \$5,000 goal, whereupon the society hired lottery agents to finish the job.

Raising funds by a lottery, however, did not set well with some members. When the Reverend Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, resigned his membership over the issue, the society dropped the lottery idea and returned to private solicitation for completing the fund drive. But the money already raised by the lottery made the society debt free, and by 1839 the trustees announced in the annual report that their funds amounted to \$3,670, which was on loan to the city of Providence at six percent interest. Furthermore, a subscription drive was underway for raising \$3,500 more for the building fund, and \$2,100 was already pledged by a "few gentlemen."¹⁵

With these bright prospects the society hired James C. Bucklin as architect for the new building. Bucklin, who was one of the architects of the famous Arcade building, created a 50-x-30-foot classic Greek Temple design constructed of marble. Called the Cabinet Building, the new headquarters on Waterman Street were dedicated in November 1844, just twenty-two years after the society was founded.¹⁶

To experience such pressing space needs so early in its history was surely the manifestation of an aggressive collecting program. Like the societies of New Hampshire and other states, Rhode Island published and circulated a detailed want list,¹⁷ but it also aggressively sought out important collections. One of the influential entrepreneurs that the Rhode Island society courted with an eye toward acquiring his extensive historical collection was Moses Brown. He was the last surviving member of the famous Brown brothers, who were active in banking, shipping, land acquisition, and manufacturing. Brown presided as chairman at the society's first annual meeting, made generous gifts, and also permitted the society to store its collections in his bank building. When he died in 1839 the society appointed a committee to ascertain whether Moses Brown had made any provision in his will to leave the Society his papers. Brown had not, but his family subsequently did. In 1837 the society purchased for \$300 the significant fifty-volume collection of United States Senator Thomas Foster. Like Moses Brown, Foster was a noted antiquarian, and his collection contained thousands of documents dating from the colonial period of Providence. This acquisition may have been the earliest historical society purchase on record. From the estate of Dr. Solomon Drowne, the society acquired a substantial run of *The Providence Gazette*, one of the state's influential newspapers. In 1839 when the trustees learned that important documents relating to the history of Rhode Island were found

in the office of the secretary of state, they arranged to have them copied, and they succeeded in getting the state legislature to appropriate a sum of \$75 to cover the costs. Acquisition of these pivotal collections stimulated collecting activities. By 1840 the society had at least 15 newspaper collections, and when it moved into its new quarters four years later, it had the nucleus of a major state and local history research collection.¹⁸

The society was equally enthusiastic about its publication program during these formative years. Its first publication (in 1827) was Roger Williams's *A Key to the Language of America*, a glossary of the Narragansett Indian language. Rhode Islanders considered religious freedom and the separation of church and state one of "the most important achievements recorded in the history of human civilization." An objective of its publishing program was to call attention to "the persecution inflicted by the early Puritans of Massachusetts on their brethren of different religious creeds." Samuel Gorton's *Simplicity's Defense Against Seven-Headed Policy* (Providence, 1835), the society's second publication, documented the persecution and banishment Massachusetts Puritans had inflicted on its religious dissidents. The third volume was Elisha R. Potter's *The Early History of Narragansett* (Providence, 1835). Volume four was John Callendar's *An Historical Discourse on the Civil and Religious Affairs of the Colony of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1838). Volume five was William R. Staples' *Annals of the Town of Providence from its First Settlement to the Organization of the City Government in June 1832* (Providence, 1843). With volume 6 began the practice of including documentary materials in the collections series. The main article was Edwin M. Stone's "The Invasion of Canada in 1775, Including the U.S. Revolutionary War Journal of Captain Stimson Thayer (1776), or the Perils and Sufferings of the Army under Col. Benedict Arnold in its March Through the Wilderness of Quebec. . . ." Also included were revolutionary correspondence from 1775-82 and Morgan Edwards's "Materials for a History of the Baptists in Rhode Island."¹⁹ The list is not long, but it was impressive for a fledgling organization.

A public lecture series, used both to create and disseminate interest in Rhode Island history and as a fund-raising tool, was considered a strong program feature even when attendance was poor. The society scheduled its first lecture on 30 October 1828, at the State House. The speaker, William Hunter of Newport, failed to appear, whereupon the members "consoled themselves . . . by a festive and social entertainment." In 1834 the board reported the lecture series failed to "awaken interest in the objects of the Society and enrich its treasury."²⁰

Not discouraged, in the mid-1830s, society president John Howland

promoted a special lecture series at Franklin Hall to raise money for the building. If the success of the lecture program was uneven, the subject matter was superlative. Topics covered in the antebellum period included the Revolutionary War, early towns and settlements, mechanic arts and manufactures, Indian tribes and Indians wars, religious sects and denominations, religious liberty, naval and maritime affairs, settlement of French Huguenots in New England, the United States Constitution, the war of 1812, medical sketches, industries of Providence, Loyalists of the American Revolution, Roger Williams, German immigration to America, strawbraiding in America, history of motive power in Providence, and historic sites.²¹

The collection of museum objects gathered for display in the society's cabinet was also initiated in this early period. Some significant objects collected included a British grenadier's cap found at the foot of Bunker's Hill, the "Bunch of Grapes" trade sign from Benjamin Thurber's store, the compass and sun dial belonging to Roger Williams, and a bullet from the gun that killed Amas Sprague. The most spectacular early artifact was the theatre drop-scene depicting Providence in 1810.²²

Like other societies, Rhode Island's established an exchange program with sister institutions and other libraries. The most interesting is the correspondence with the Society for Northern Antiquities in Denmark regarding the reported Viking landings at Dighton and the old stone tower at Newport.²³

The New Hampshire Historical Society

Two energetic local historians are credited with the organization of the New Hampshire Historical Society, Jacob Bailey Moore (1797-1853) and John Farmer (1789-1838). Still only in his early twenties, the enterprising Moore had already gained a successful reputation as bookseller, publisher, and printer in Concord. His part-time associate, John Farmer, though new to the region, was a junior member of the apothecary firm of Morrill and Farmer. Farmer initiated the organizing drive. Early in January 1823 he proposed the idea in a letter to his friend, John Kelly. In the following month he published a similar proposal in the *Monthly Literary Journal*. Farmer suggested that a state historical society be organized in conjunction with plans to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Portsmouth. He relied on Moore, who had extensive connections in the community, to rally the support of prominent state and local dignitaries: Governor Levi Woodbury of Francestown, ex-Governor William Plumer and his son of Epping, and Congressman Ichabod Bartlett of Salisbury,

among others. The list of thirty-four incorporators included lawyers, judges, professors from Dartmouth College, merchants, and bankers.²⁴

Following meetings in Exeter and Concord, formal organization took place at Portsmouth, 20 May 1823. The act of incorporation passed the legislature in the following month. The charter limited membership to 50. Honorary members were not to exceed the number of resident members; the entrance fee was \$5 and annual dues were \$3. Once incorporated, the society published and distributed copies of its charter and bylaws and a comprehensive want list of materials it was willing to accept for its collections.²⁵

For many years the society had permission to store its holdings in a room in the State House. In 1837 the society rented space in a hall above the Concord Bank, and in the 1840s more suitable rooms were leased over the Merrimac County Bank building at 214 North Main Street. The collections did not seem to grow as rapidly as they did in Rhode Island, for it was not until 1869 that the society purchased the Merrimac building for a permanent home.²⁶

In these formative years the publication program seemed to command the highest priority. Farmer was elected a member of the publications committee, along with William Plumer, son of the former governor, and Parker Noyes, a school teacher from Salisbury. In January 1824, less than a year after organization, the first volume of the *Collections* appeared, skillfully edited and published by Farmer and Moore. The first section gave a brief account of the formation of the society. Farmer gave recognition to the existing historical societies in Massachusetts, New York, Maine, and Rhode Island, as well as the Essex Institute, and he correctly predicted that every state in the Union eventually would have a state historical society. Jacob Moore contributed a brief history of Concord that included 65 pages of short biographies. Farmer also contributed an article on the Penacook Indians. In all there were some 38 articles on New Hampshire history. Another volume appeared in 1827, three more in the 1830s, and five more in the 1840s and 1850s.²⁷

The first important manuscript collection came in 1827. John Belknap, son of Massachusetts society founder Jeremy Belknap, donated a collection of documents and papers his father had used in writing the second and third volumes of his history of New Hampshire. It contained many early provincial manuscripts, laws, commissions, letters, trade records, depositions, township lists, petitions, and chronicles. At the 1829 annual meeting society librarian Jacob Moore reported that since its organization the society had collected over 300 books, nearly 200 pamphlets, plus sermons, addresses, and several files of newspapers. It had

also collected several hundred mineral and geological specimens. In 1835, another important collection arrived, that of ex-Governor William Plumer.²⁸

Unfortunately, the society's two prime movers, Farmer and Moore, did not long remain active. Moore, who had published three volumes of the *Collections*, and who had served as librarian from 1823 to 1830, suffered financial difficulties in the 1830s. He had been editor of the *New Hampshire Journal*, but in 1839 he moved to New York City to become assistant editor of Horace Greeley's *New Yorker*.²⁹ Farmer, who had health problems most of his life, died in 1838 at the age of 49. At the time he was the society's corresponding secretary. At the annual meeting in 1839, the society passed a special resolution acknowledging Farmer's services and his efforts to promote the general interests of the society.³⁰

Although membership was restricted, the society experienced a steady growth during the antebellum period. Initially, membership was limited to 50. In 1832 the number was increased to 75, and when this limit was achieved in 1850, the society voted to abandon any limitation, thereby opening its membership to anyone with an interest in state and local history. The New Hampshire society also had a long list of national leaders as honorary members, including Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, Governor John A. Dix of New York, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, Samuel F.B. Morse, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Massachusetts society early initiated this practice as a public relations gesture, and the other five New England societies adopted the practice, but New Hampshire seemed to be most successful in that regard.³¹

By 1860 the New Hampshire society was well on its way to becoming a successfully, stable organization—and a solvent one at that. In 1861, one of its members, Samuel D. Bell, made a contribution of \$100 to pay off the society's total indebtedness!³²

The Connecticut Historical Society

The Connecticut Historical Society's organizing efforts reached the incorporation stage in May 1825.³³ The 31 charter members represented the state's social and political elite—governors, legislators, lawyers, doctors, merchants, and educators. But after a few meetings the society ceased to function because its president, Judge John Trumbull, moved to Detroit.

The idea of a Connecticut Historical Society, however, did not die. In the interim some of the original charter members, headed by America's prominent educator Henry Barnard, formed a history club which met on a regular basis to hear papers on historical subjects. Later, Barnard claimed

the history club meetings led to the society's revival. Although his leadership role is acknowledged, others were involved, most notably Edward C. Herrick, a member of the Yale faculty who later became society librarian.

On 1 May 1839, acting upon a new petition, the Connecticut Assembly granted the society the powers and privileges originally approved in 1825. Following reorganization, initial meetings were preoccupied with policy and procedural matters: new bylaws, election of officers and standing committees, distribution of published circulars stating the purpose of the society, and stressing the need to gather and preserve Connecticut's historical records before they were lost or destroyed. Rented rooms over a store owned by Humphrey and Seyms at 124 Main Street solved the headquarters problem. The first meeting at this new location was on 13 September 1839. Over the next 21 years the revived society flourished. Barnard, who served as corresponding secretary from 1839 to 1846 and as president from 1854 to 1860, rightly deserves a great deal of credit for the organization's successful growth.

Anniversaries of significant historical events have always been a catalyst for organizing historical associations. In Connecticut, it was the two-hundredth anniversary commemorating the establishment of civil government in Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford (1639) that helped motivate the reorganization effort. The actual anniversary date occurred in January, but poor weather forced postponement of the society's celebration until April 1840. The period-costume ball was a gala evening event. Ladies with powdered hair, starched ruffs, and embroidered skirts danced smartly with gentlemen wearing high stockings, buckled shoes, and lace shirts. On the following day members and a long list of distinguished guests gathered at Center Church, Hartford, to hear a talk given by old-line Federalist Noah Webster.

Two events in the 1840s went far toward assuring the society's future: securing permanent headquarters in the Wadsworth Athanaeum and the appointment of the Reverend Thomas Robbins as full-time librarian. Between 1839 and 1844, collections grew so rapidly that the rooms above Humphrey and Seyms's wooden store building were neither safe nor adequate. The society had already gathered an impressive collection of pamphlets, bound volumes of newspapers, numerous books and manuscripts, portraits, coins, and furniture.

The opportunity for securing permanent quarters came in 1841 when Daniel Wadsworth announced a plan to erect an art gallery near his Hartford home. Henry Barnard convinced Wadsworth to build a structure large enough to accommodate two other cultural organizations: the

Connecticut Historical Society and the Hartford Young Men's Institute. The society launched a fund drive to pay for its share of building space. Society president Thomas Day and members James Hosmer and James Ward made substantial contributions. Construction began in March 1841 and the society moved into its new quarters in December 1843.³⁴

The appointment of the Reverend Thomas Robbins provided stability and, eventually, a bequest of a substantial historical collection. Robbins was a minister and an avid historical collector. In the early 1840s, his historical collection contained almost 3,500 volumes and a comparable number of pamphlets (mostly religious sermons). He was a member of the American Antiquarian Society and had been vocal about establishing a historical society in Connecticut. The ultimate disposition of his collection had always concerned him and caused him to change his will more than once, each time designating a different institution as its beneficiary.

The circumstances surrounding Robbins's appointment as librarian were rather unusual. He had left Connecticut to become minister of the Congregationalist Church in Mattpoisett, Massachusetts. During his tenure, it seemed that the Reverend Robbins, a bachelor, was accused of taking some liberties with a female parishioner. The incident prompted church leaders to consider his dismissal. News of this unpleasant state of affairs reached the Connecticut Historical Society's president, Henry Barnard, who quickly saw an opportunity for filling the position of librarian and for possibly acquiring an important historical collection.

Because the new building costs had put a strain on the society's resources, the big stumbling block was the librarian's salary. In time, the matter was handled like most transactions in the private societies. Barnard recruited a number of gentlemen to provide gifts for this purpose. When the total fell short of the \$300 a year Robbins sought (a sum he needed to enable him to continue purchasing books for his collection), Barnard guaranteed Robbins's salary against his own name. Nevertheless it took 28 pleading letters to convince the reluctant Robbins to come to Hartford in 1844. With more delicate maneuvering, especially on Barnard's part, on 3 October 1845 Robbins willed his collection to the Connecticut Historical Society. But there were further negotiations in the following year. Robbins's salary was increased to \$600 a year, and in return, the librarian executed an actual deed of gift of his collection to the society, effective upon his death.

Public programs were initiated and publications were scheduled in these formative years but with only moderate success. A lecture series was started in 1843, and later these lectures were opened to the public. Tickets were sold to cover costs of refreshments. Some members objected to the

social side of the lecture series, including the practice of opening them to the public, but after 1856 papers were presented at monthly meetings on a regular basis. The society clearly intended to start a publications program, but it always lacked funds. A legacy from society president Thomas Day in 1855 motivated the society to change its bylaws, thereby designating the income from this gift, plus fees from life members and special donations, to be used for this purpose. It was not until 1860 that the first publication appeared.

When librarian Robbins died in 1856, his collection enhanced the society's holdings considerably, but other members had also made significant gifts. And as the collections grew the housekeeping problems rose proportionately. Frail in health, librarian Robbins and the few assistants available (when the society could afford it) were not able to keep abreast with cataloging. Many books and pamphlets simply accumulated in piles on the floor. The policy of permitting members to borrow books and other materials was halted in 1854, when it became apparent the practice had resulted in some serious losses.

The museum collection, though not large, contained important historical artifacts, including the Elder Brewster chest, an Elizabethan turned chair made in New Haven, General Israel Putnam's tavern sign, portraits, silver, weapons, tools, together with the sort of trivia (including mineralogical and geological specimens) all historical societies collected throughout the nineteenth century. The society's museum holdings, however—particularly its collection of portraits, furniture, and silver—are today considered exemplary.

Good fortune continued to smile brightly on the Connecticut Historical Society. In 1857 Hartford businessman and philanthropist David Wilkinson died, leaving the society \$100,000. The bequest enabled the society to build an addition to the Wadsworth Athanaeum and establish a fund of \$15,000, the income from which was to be used to pay for the salary of a librarian. Few would dispute the fact that by 1860, the society had made its mark in Connecticut and elsewhere as an important educational and cultural institution.

The Vermont Historical Society

The Vermont Historical Society was incorporated in 1838, the year previous to the reorganization of the Connecticut society, but any comparison ends there. The Vermont society's meager achievements in the early period of its history may be attributed to a variety of reasons, but two stand out: the self-interest of the society's first president, Henry

Stevens, and a destructive fire in 1857.

A bill to incorporate the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society (the name was changed in 1859 to the Vermont Historical Society) was introduced in the legislature on 24 October 1838, and was passed on 5 November, just one day before adjournment. Whereas other New England organizations managed to have a long, distinguished list of incorporators, the Vermont society had only four: Henry Stevens of Barnet, and Oramel H. Smith, Daniel P. Thompson, and George B. Mansure of Montpelier. The key figure in the quartet was Henry Stevens, the father of Henry Stevens, Jr., the nineteenth-century London book dealer. The others were attorneys, each of whom had served in the state legislature. The bill also specified that the society's library and cabinet "shall be kept in the town of Barnet, in the County of Caledonia," which in fact was Stevens's home. This provision proved to be a major stumbling block for generating a successful pattern of growth and development. The bill of incorporation gave Stevens authority to call the first meeting, which he did not call for two years.³⁵

At the society's first meeting held in October 1840, Stevens was elected president, librarian, and cabinet keeper. The constitution and bylaws, also adopted at this meeting, had another interesting provision: "No article shall ever, on any occasion, be loaned or taken from the museum; nor shall any book or other article be borrowed from the library, except by vote of the council."³⁶ As there were seven councilors (board of trustees) who met infrequently, and since Stevens's home was in a remote rural area, these restrictions gave him complete control over the collections.

Stevens, whose knowledge of Vermont history and historiography was extensive, was president of the Vermont society for eighteen years. According to Vermont society historian Weston A. Cate, Jr., "he did little to nurture the Society and foster its growth, especially when its needs conflicted with his own antiquarian concerns." Cate concluded that the many facets of Stevens's character displayed "a wide range of interests, attitudes, and behaviors. He was at once a sheep farmer, an inn proprietor, a toll-road keeper, a constant reader, the state's most knowledgeable antiquarian, a traveler, an opportunist with a selective memory, a vehement prohibitionist, a collector and organizer, an indefatigable correspondent, a schemer, a lover of good humor, a legislator, a postmaster, and the father of several children who were destined to be better known than he."³⁷

Despite Stevens's proprietary control over the library and collections, the society had a semblance of a going organization. It held two meetings a year, one being the annual meeting, which was always held at the state capitol building in Montpelier while the legislature was in

session. The format was a standard one: a business meeting followed by an oration. Since the meetings were jointly sponsored, the arrangement had positive benefits. The legislature provided a place for the meeting, and on an irregular basis, it paid for the publication of the talks presented. First to appear was James D. Butler's *Deficiencies in Our History* (Montpelier, 1846) [16 October meeting]. An appendix contained the society's charter, constitution, and bylaws. In 1849 the legislature published talks presented at a joint meeting held on 20 October 1848, and two more talks were published in the 1850s.³⁸ Copies of these published presentations were distributed to society members and dignitaries throughout Vermont and New England.

The society's association with the legislature resulted in an arrangement, beginning in 1848, of allowing the society use of three rooms in the capitol building in Montpelier. But here again, Stevens's self-interest surfaced. Cate summarized what took place: "In 1848 the legislature gave the society the use of rooms 24, 35, and 36 in the attic of the state house. Theoretically this should have been the second home for the society, but Henry Stevens had other ideas. He had been actively seeking to sell his own private collection to the state, so he used this opportunity to place his own collection in the state house rooms."³⁹ The state never bought the collection.

Vermont's dependence upon the state legislature was somewhat different from the experiences of the other New England societies. Although the others initially sought quarters in their respective state capitols, each had worked toward renting space at some other location, or at acquiring a building. The reverse was the case in Vermont. In 1851, the legislature provided that "The library and cabinet of natural history of said society may hereafter be kept in the upper unoccupied rooms of the State House at Montpelier, provided the State shall be at no expense in behalf of the society."⁴⁰ The arrangement clearly indicates that collections had been accumulating in two places, at the state capitol and in Barnet, Henry Stevens's home.

Matters came to a head on 6 January 1857 when the society's collections at the state house were destroyed in a major fire. The Vermont organization's holdings were suddenly reduced to what remained at Stevens's house in Barnet. However, Stevens had never kept accurate records of what belonged to the society and what belonged to him. Steps to wrest control of the collections from Stevens began in 1858. The members elected Daniel P. Thompson of Montpelier, one of the society's four charter members, librarian and cabinet keeper. The society also amended its charter, repealing the section that designated the town of

Barnet as the place where the collection was to be kept. Committees were appointed to call on Stevens and arrange for moving the society's holdings to the rebuilt state house. Stevens stonewalled the visiting committees and demanded to be reimbursed \$300 for keeping the collections. In 1859 Governor Hiland Hall, one of Stevens's enemies, became president of the society. He was one of the younger and more energetic leaders who felt that the society should broaden its influence by having meetings in other major towns and cities. This gradually occurred, but only after 1860. To the present day it has not been determined whether the Vermont society ever retrieved any collections from Stevens, nor is there any record that he ever made a gift to the organization.⁴¹

Vermont's was the only state historical society in New England faced with both a conflict of interest situation and a major fire. There was no question that these two factors hampered its growth; yet, it did survive. The Vermont society was the only one that developed a dependency relationship with the state. Other societies gladly accepted storage and exhibit space in their capitol buildings, and even small financial appropriations to assist in some way, but these special associations were temporary and were terminated whenever the organization was able to obtain independent quarters. By accepting space in the state house over a much longer period, well beyond 1860, the Vermont society became closely identified with the state government. Cate has pointed out that this association "made it seem to those who did not know, that the Society was a department of state government." In the end, this is precisely what occurred. A legislative act passed in 1870 actually made the society a state agency. Even then the society did not profit much, for it only received modest and irregular appropriations for binding. Not until 1888 did the society begin to receive an annual appropriation of \$100.⁴²

Conclusion

By 1860 each of the five New England states had operating state historical societies. Although all looked upon the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New-York Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society as role models, they were content to focus their interests on the history of their own state. This emphasis undoubtedly won them the broad-base support necessary for success. By 1860, the state historical society movement, if it can be termed that, was a well-established national trend, and as New Hampshire's John Farmer correctly predicted 25 years earlier, there would eventually be one in every state of the union.⁴³

ENDNOTES

1. For more detailed information on the development of historical societies in the United States, see David Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of Historical Studies in America, 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Leslie W. Dunlap, *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* (Madison: Privately printed by Cantwell Printing Co., 1944); and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies* ([Boston]: Boston Athenaeum, 1962).
2. James Davie Butler, *Deficiencies in Our History* (Montpelier: Eastman and Danforth, 1846), p. 4.
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5. *Historical Sketch*, pp. 4-5.
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12. *Historical Sketch of the [Rhode Island] Society*, pp. 3, 5.
13. *Annual Report . . . of the Rhode Island Historical Society . . . 1839*, p. 3.
14. *Annual Report . . . of the Rhode Island Historical Society . . . 1839*, p. 3; Albert T. Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet of Curiosity," in *Old Rhode Island* 3, 10 (1993): 16-17.

15. *Annual Report . . . of the Rhode Island Historical Society . . . 1839*, p. 3; Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," p. 16.
16. Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," p. 17.
17. *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society* (Providence: The Society, 1835), vol. 2.
18. *Annual Report . . . of the Rhode Island Historical Society . . . 1839*, p. 2; Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," p. 20.
19. Zacharial Chandler, *A Half-Century Memorial*, pp. 11, 20; Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," p. 21.
20. *Historical Sketch of the [Rhode Island] Society*, p. 7.
21. *Historical Sketch of the [Rhode Island] Society*, p. 8.
22. Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," pp. 19-20.
23. *Annual Report . . . of the Rhode Island Historical Society . . . 1839*, p. 2; Klyberg, "Rhode Island's Cabinet," p. 20.
24. *The Act of Incorporation, Constitution, and By-Laws, of the New Hampshire Historical Society With a List of Articles . . . Wanted by the Society* (Concord: Printed by Jacob B. Moore, 1823), pp. 3-5; *Constitution and By-Laws of the New Hampshire Historical Society . . .* (Concord: Printed at the Observer Press, 1833), pp. 3-7; *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society* (Concord: The Society, 1824), vol. 1, p. 5; "A Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," in *Historical New Hampshire* 3 (April 1947): 4-5.
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27. "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," p. 7; *Collections . . .*, vol. 1, p. 5.
28. "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," pp. 10-11.
29. In New York, Moore became active in the New-York Historical Society and was elected librarian on 4 January 1848. He resigned in 1849 when President Taylor assigned him the task of opening a post office in San Francisco. In the following year President Fillmore appointed him deputy postmaster of San Francisco. During this period he sent many western newspapers to the New-York Historical Society, where his son was assistant librarian. *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 7, p. 127; "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," p. 14.
30. "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," pp. 11-12.

31. "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," pp. 8, 13.
32. "Sketch of the New Hampshire Historical Society," p. 14
33. *The Charter of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Connecticut Historical Society . . .* (Hartford: The Society, 1839), p. 1; *The Connecticut Historical Society and Associated Institutions* (Hartford: The Society, 1889), pp. 21-27; Thompson R. Harlow, *125 Years of the Connecticut Historical Society, 1825-1950* (Hartford: The Society, 1951), p. 7; *American Quarterly Register* 13 (1841): 284-292; Bickford, *The Connecticut Historical Society*, pp. 6-9, 21-17. Society director Christopher Bickford's study is the most comprehensive and the best account.
34. Bickford, *Connecticut Historical Society*, pp. 32-33; *Connecticut Historical Society and Associated Institutions*, pp. 1-20.
35. "Act of Incorporation of the Vermont Historical Society . . . 1838," in Butler, *Deficiencies in Our History*, p. 25; Weston A. Cate, Jr., *The Vermont Historical Society, 1838-1970* (Montpelier: The Society, 1988), pp. 1-11.
36. "Act of Incorporation of the Vermont Historical Society . . . 1838," p. 27.
37. Cate, *Vermont Historical Society*, pp. 7-8.
38. "Act of Incorporation of the Vermont Historical Society . . . 1838," p. 25; *Joint Orations [Vermont Historical Society and the State Legislature] Delivered before the Legislature, Montpelier, October 20, 1848* (Burlington: State of Vermont? 1849); Daniel P. Thompson, *An Address before the Vermont Historical Society, 24th October, 1850* (Burlington: The Society? 1850); Albert D. Hager and Pliney H. White, *The Life and Services of Matthew Lyon, and the Marbles of Vermont . . . October 29, 1858* (Burlington: 1858); *Constitution and By-laws of the Vermont Historical Society. . .* (Woodstock: 1860).
39. Cate, *Vermont Historical Society*, pp. 24-25, 33.
40. Cate, *Vermont Historical Society*, pp. 25-26.
41. Cate, *Vermont Historical Society*, pp. 14-15.
42. Cate, *Vermont Historical Society*, p. 27.
43. *Editor's note:* In addition to the state historical activities covered by Dr. Silvestro in this essay, several local societies were also organized in these five New England states in the antebellum era. Leslie W. Dunlap, in his already-cited *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860*, describes the following: Connecticut: Litchfield County Historical and Antiquarian Society, 1856 (p. 144); Rhode Island: Newport Historical Society, 1853 (pp. 206-207); and Vermont: Middlebury Historical Society, 1843 (p. 213), and Orleans County Natural and Civil History Society, 1853 (pp. 213-214).

New York

James J. Heslin

[James J. Heslin was long associated with the New-York Historical Society, rising from assistant director in 1956 to director from 1960 to 1982, when he retired. Earlier in his career he was on the staff of the New York Public Library and the University of Buffalo Libraries. Dr. Heslin holds graduate degrees from Boston University and Columbia University and has been a lecturer at Columbia.]

There are numerous definitions of "history" and what it means, some of them profound and meaningful, others, simply windy. I prefer the statement that "the historian is the memory of civilization. A civilization without memory ceases to be civilized. A civilization without history ceases to have identity. . . ." ¹

Clearly, we cannot understand, or know, about history without historical resources. Two centuries ago material relating to American history was not available.

It is a curious but perhaps understandable fact that few documentary resources were collected during or immediately after the Revolutionary War. John Adams, for one, complained about the reading of thousands of frivolous novels—surely an exaggeration—while the history of the new nation was neglected, indeed despised or ignored. ²

During the Revolutionary War, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts proposed in Congress that each state should designate an official to collect "material" (documents, diaries, etc.) of the period. The proposal was not acted on, and years later John Adams declared that had this proposal been carried out, it would have meant more than all the histories and orations since the war.

There were those, however, who believed that historical materials should be gathered, and the questions arose: Who would do it and where would such materials be housed. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, there were few libraries or repositories. For one, the Library of Congress had about 3,000 volumes, but it was destroyed in the British invasion of Washington in 1814.

The solution to the dilemma came with the development of the first historical societies. They provided not only quarters to house historical material but the impetus to collect such data. From simple beginnings came the output of the future—an output so great that in a bibliography published a decade ago, 15,000 entries related to the Revolution and its immediate aftermath.

The founders of the early historical societies were a varied group. In general, they were animated by a sense of history; but since motives are rarely unmixed, they were also prompted by local pride and a consciousness of their own role in the making of history. There was even a certain sense of rivalry—especially in New York, the last colony to approve the Declaration of Independence—in the face of the contributions of Massachusetts and Virginia to the conflict.

John Pintard was the founder and guiding spirit of the New-York Historical Society in 1804, the second historical society to be established in the new nation after that of Massachusetts (1791). A descendant of Huguenots, Pintard was a graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) and was deeply involved in civil affairs. Among other pursuits he was city clerk of New York, city inspector, and, during the Revolution, he had served on a commission to alleviate the plight of American soldiers and sailors imprisoned in the city and in prison ships in the harbor.

Pintard was stimulated to establish an organization to collect historical materials by the example of Jeremy Belknap, the founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society. He called on his friends for support, among them DeWitt Clinton, mayor of New York and later governor, and others equally prominent. Some of the founders, twenty-nine in all, were physicians, clergymen, political figures, and merchants in what today one would call "the establishment."

Fortunately for the fledgling institution, the fact that the mayor was among its founders helped to secure a rent-free room in the City Hall on Wall Street, where the organization remained for five years.

Its constitution, drawn up on 10 December 1804, provided that "This Society shall be denominated the New-York Historical Society and that the object of the Society shall be to procure and preserve whatever may relate to the national, civil, literary, and educational history of the United States in general and this state in particular." Had this objective been followed literally it would have required, in time, a building akin to that of the Pentagon.

On 22 January 1805 the new society set about to conduct an advertising campaign. Having elected a president—Egbert Benson, a New York State Supreme Court judge and former member of the Continental

Congress and the United States Congress—an appeal was made to the public. In the newspapers on 13 February 1805 there appeared an address to the public that consisted of an extensive list of the subjects desired for the library that included books, pamphlets, and manuscripts. These were not to be confined to the United States but "to the whole Continent"—such items as sermons, orations, poems, narratives of missionaries, magazines, newspapers, etc. In April five hundred copies of the appeal were printed. The library received a few gifts but only one new member was added. So much for an early direct mail campaign!

John Pintard was not well off but he was an inveterate book collector, and he believed that if the library had a balanced foundation it would develop more rapidly. In 1807 he offered to sell to the society his substantial holdings of Americana at cost. Some funds had been collected by 1809, and the Pintard library was purchased. Despite the facts that Pintard had yet to collect all of his money and the financial resources of the society were low, the organization decided to honor the memory of Henry Hudson and his expedition in 1609 up the river that bears his name. On 4 September 1809, after listening to various speeches, an audience including the mayor of New York sat down to a dinner at 4 p.m. There were thirty-one toasts, including, among others, one each to Queen Isabella, Christopher Columbus, Peter Stuyvesant, and the Massachusetts Historical Society. The toastmaster, Dr. Samuel Mitchell, proposed a toast to the "speedy termination of our foreign relations"—eliciting from the *New York Post* the sour comment, "What a charming man to represent a commercial city."³

The banquet concluded with a toast by John Pintard to the ladies, "the American Fair, without whose endearing society this western world, the rich inheritance from our enterprising ancestors, would still be a wilderness indeed."

So ended the first, but by no means the last, of the society's celebrations. In 1811, it issued the first of its *Collections*, consisting of various unpublished laws and the journals of Verrazano and Henry Hudson—the beginning of a long list of publications over the next years.

Meanwhile, with money continuing in short supply, the society moved from one building to another, without its own permanent home. As the War of 1812 began, concern about possible bombardment of the city added to the organization's anxieties.

By the end of the war in 1815 the society's library had grown to nearly 500 books and pamphlets, partial files of 130 newspapers, and several important portraits that accompanied various donations of books. Some of the acquisitions included rarities, such as the first plan of the city of New

York, published in 1731; 209 issues of Boston's first newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*; and a file of New York's first newspaper, William Bradford's *New-York Gazette*.

A shortage of money continued to be a problem, so DeWitt Clinton, now governor of the state of New York, urged passage of a bill on 15 April 1814 granting the society the right to raise \$12,000 by a lottery.⁴ Happily anticipating this windfall, the society imprudently borrowed money with which to buy books and manuscripts, pay for a second volume of *Collections*, and publish its first catalog.

Pintard managed to obtain space from the city to house the society's holdings at a yearly rent of one peppercorn. At the next meeting on 9 July 1816 he was able to report an important gift, the Revolutionary War papers of General Horatio Gates.

With more space and the prospect of the lottery money, the society began to expand, and committees were appointed for the collection of zoology, botany, and mineralogy. Cases were built as various species poured in and, eventually, the collections became so large that, sensibly, they were turned over to the Lyceum of Natural History.

The anticipated lottery money was slow in coming, so the society, in the summer of 1823, sold its share of the lottery for \$8,000 to Union College in order to pay some of its debts. Even so, there was still a debt of \$10,000 with no means of payment. A program of strict economy was instituted. Early in 1825 a proposal to sell the library raised a storm. When an advertisement appeared in the 4 May 1825 issue of the *Commercial Advertiser* offering "valuable books" for sale at auction, the editor announced that it was "with deep mortification" that the advertisement was printed. On 6 May, the editor again assailed the proposed auction and quoted the *Daily Advertiser* also as being "mortified" at public indifference toward the institution. John Pintard, who was still owed \$3,000, was so disillusioned that he never again appeared at the society, although he continued as treasurer until 1827. The society was split in two; the president, second vice-president, and the painter John Trumbull resigned; and no meetings were held for a year. Finally in 1827 Governor Clinton urged help from the legislature, and a bill was passed granting the society \$5,000 if, in turn, it would pay its debts. This grant saved the library, and the society finally balanced its accounts by not paying John Pintard \$1,400 owed to him. The entire membership of the state legislature was elected honorary members, but nobody thanked John Pintard.

Encouraged by the receipt of its first legacy in 1832—\$300 from the estate of Isaiah Thomas, founder of the American Antiquarian Society—the institution then moved to its fourth home in that year. No meetings were

held, however, from June until December. The keys to the library were distributed to officers of the society, who in turn lent them to friends, and confusion resulted. The society went into an eclipse. There were no meetings from 1833 to 1836, and the treasury contained \$4.68! It appeared that the society was finished. In an effort to reverse this decline, a new president, Peter Stuyvesant (1778-1847), a great-great grandson of Governor Petrus Stuyvesant, worked with friends to resuscitate the ailing organization.

The treasurer was authorized to borrow \$1,000 and pay outstanding bills, and an effort was made to collect back dues. A new lock was put on the door of the library room to keep out unauthorized persons. At this juncture, in 1837, both New York University and the Stuyvesant Institute offered rent-free quarters. The officers chose the Stuyvesant Institute on Broadway opposite Bond Street and all seemed well when, on 10 May, the Panic of 1837 hit the country and the city. Banks closed their doors, and there was no meeting of the New-York Historical Society for several months. Still there were some loyal members, and the society met in its new quarters on 28 September 1837. With two large rooms now available, one for the library and the other for meetings, it was decided to hold lectures. This program was successful, and seven lectures were given through 1838 and repeated the following year. An anniversary meeting was held to observe the semicentennial of Washington's inauguration, with John Quincy Adams as the speaker.

When all seemed to be going well, another blow fell. The Stuyvesant Institute became bankrupt, and the society was forced to move again. Happily, full accommodations were offered by the newly established New York University, founded in 1831. During the summer of 1841 the books of the society were moved into the university's library rooms on Washington Square. The society agreed to pay all the expenses of moving and the upkeep, agreeing in return to allow its collections to be used by students of the university.⁵

For sixteen years the society remained at New York University and was accessible to a larger clientele than ever. Despite financial turmoil and constant relocations, the library had grown greatly—chiefly through donations. The lecture series was successfully continued, and enough money was raised to cover debts with popular speakers such as Daniel Webster and Herman Melville. In October 1842 the members voted to furnish refreshments at meetings, a practice followed for many years.

One major achievement of the society dated back to 1838. The organization suggested to the state legislature that appropriate funds be raised for copying and publishing manuscripts concerning the early history

of New York state to be found in the archives of England, France, and Holland. The following year the society again memorialized the legislature, Governor Clinton sent a special message endorsing the project, and the sum of \$4,000 was appropriated. John Romeyn Brodhead was employed as the agent from New York state. The result of the research in the archives of England, France, and Holland appeared in the publication of a series *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* in fifteen volumes between 1856 and 1883.⁶ This was the beginning of a long series of continuing historical publications by the state of New York. From the material obtained, the *Documentary History of the State of New York*, edited by E. B. O'Callaghan in four volumes (1849-1851), and the *Journals of the New York Provincial Congress* in two volumes (1842), were published. These projects were a boon to later historians.

During the presidency of Albert Gallatin (1843-1849), the former secretary of the treasury in the cabinet of Thomas Jefferson, there was a resurgence in the society. Nearly 1,000 new members joined. The library was open (beginning in 1843) from 10 to 2 and 7 to 9 each business day. A more organized program was put into effect. Books and manuscripts were put in order and cataloged, and gifts were properly acknowledged and recorded.

Possibly stimulated by this cheerful state of affairs, the society engaged in one of its more bizarre projects. In 1845 an abortive effort was made to change the name of the country from the United States of America to the "Republic of Alleghania." This brainstorm was the work of a special committee, but the reaction from other historical societies soon ended this fiasco.

During the later part of the 1840s—1 June 1847, to be exact—a small but growing fund was started with the intent of raising \$50,000 for the erection of a permanent home for the society. The *Annual Report* of the society for 1849 stated that the library contained 15,000 books and pamphlets, 1,400 volumes of newspaper, 2,000 maps, 15,000 manuscripts, and a collection of coins and medals. Among these holdings were original maps of the Revolutionary War, a survey of the war in parts of New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These were acquired from the son of Simeon DeWitt, geographer of the Continental Army.

On 5 June 1849 the society's librarian, Jacob B. Moore, resigned to accept the job of postmaster of San Francisco. In this role, during the midst of the gold rush, Moore sent back to the society a large amount of material relating to the state of California and its history. This made the New York organization the possessor of one of the important collections of newspapers, books, and pamphlets relating to the Pacific coast state.

Meanwhile, the society's museum collection developed impressively. With new quarters in a building especially constructed for the institution and opened in 1857, the society received a collection of art from the New York Gallery of Fine Arts. This included a large and valuable group of 100 paintings plus sculptures and prints. It featured examples of the art of the Hudson River School, Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durrand, William Sydney Mount, and John Trumbull.

In 1858, James Lenox, whose library was one of those that later constituted the New York Public Library, purchased some marbles from a palace in Nineveh. Lenox paid \$3,000 for these sculptures, which he presented to the society. Eventually they were purchased from the society by the Brooklyn Museum. Prior to this, in 1853, the collections of Dr. Henry Abbott (1812-1859), a British physician who had lived in Egypt, was purchased by the society. This was the greatest Egyptian collection in America (it still is one of the major collections). Eventually, this too was purchased by the Brooklyn Museum, and only recently much favorable comment was heard concerning its presentation in newly designed galleries in Brooklyn.

Much more appropriate was the acquisition, for \$4,000 raised by public subscription, of the original watercolors for the great ornithological work, *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. This collection was first presented for purchase by Mrs. Audubon. In the event it was not bought by the society, she intended it to be offered to the British Museum.

In 1864, Thomas J. Bryan offered to the society his collection of European paintings which, eventually, comprised 381 pieces. Bryan had intended to donate his collection to Cooper Union, but while on an impromptu visit to that institution he saw old Peter Cooper poking his umbrella at a painting while describing it to a visitor. This enraged Bryan, who withdrew his paintings from Cooper Union.

In 1860 the society formulated a plan to establish a museum and art gallery in Central Park. That plan was never realized, but the site offered to the society was taken eventually by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

By the end of the Civil War, in 1865, the society was not only a repository for American documentary history but a museum of art and antiquities. Here again, as it was when the institution was founded in lieu of other repositories, the society provided access to art and history in the absence of any other organization.

A *New York Times* reporter wrote in 1870 that "the museum and library of the New-York Historical Society on Second Avenue, is interesting not only to the man of learning . . . but also to every man, woman and child of average intelligence. . . ."⁷

So, this curious blend of elitism and scholarship served to answer a need during the first half of the nineteenth century long before the rise of art museums and the emphasis on history in colleges and universities.⁸

ENDNOTES

1. Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. xiii.
2. Michael Kraus, *The Writing of American History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 89.
3. R. W. G. Vail, *Knickerbocker Birthday: A Sesqui-Centennial History of the New-York Historical Society, 1804-1954* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1954), p. 365. This 547-page volume by the then director of the society provides a comprehensive history of the organization during its first 150 years.
4. Vail, *Knickerbocker Birthday*, p. 43.
5. Pamela Richards, *Scholars and Gentlemen: The Library of the New-York Historical Society* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984), p. 17.
6. Walter M. Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1962), pp. 46-47.
7. Vail, *Knickerbocker Birthday*, p. 137.
8. *Editor's note:* Dr. Heslin's essay is limited to the history of the New York-Historical Society. According to Leslie W. Dunlap, in his *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* (Madison, WI: Privately printed by Cranford Printing Co., 1944), pp. 187-191, the following other historical societies were founded in the state of New York in the antebellum era: Red Jacket Historical Society, Buffalo, 1844; Newburgh Historical Society, 1845; Staten Island Historical Society, 1856; Ulster Historical Society, 1859; Yates County Historical Society, 1860; and Rochester Historical Society, 1860.

Pennsylvania

Susan Stitt

[Since 1990 Susan Stitt has been president and chief executive officer of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. She did her graduate work at Wake Forest University and the University of Delaware and began her career in historical administration as director of the Museum of the Albemarle in North Carolina. She has also held positions with the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, the Brooklyn Museum, Old Sturbridge Village, and was director of Museums at Stony Brook, New York. She acknowledges with thanks the support and assistance in this study of Lee Arnold, the Historical Society's library director; Linda Stanley, curator of manuscripts and archives; and Carol Kersbergen, executive secretary.]

The truth is, a place is more than half memory. No place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments.¹

When did the American colonies, then the states united under a federal government, become places represented and documented by historical societies? Wallace Stegner's essay entitled "The Sense of Place" suggests that the phenomena of establishing historical societies would not have occurred until the need to pass memories from one generation to the next necessitated monuments, legends, yarns, ballads, and—yes—even history. Random reflections by some of the founders of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania suggest that the diverse peoples from varying national heritages drawn to William Penn's commonwealth also needed shared, communal memories to create common bonds before such an organization as a historical society could be sustained—as appropriate—in perpetuity. One of the society's founders remembered,

When the war was over, and men had time to breathe from the involvement of great interests and from desperate struggles, calmer minds soon recollected the necessity of more adequate means for the preservation of records. Then it was found that impediment arose from the divergence of views and habits. Impressions remaining from military and political struggles, and existing differences of religious opinions and feelings, were hard to reconcile in a common labor. . . .

That memory is contained in a sketch that begins, "The want of a Historical Society of Pennsylvania has been felt for generations."²

The first Historical Society president recalled, "in Pennsylvania I know not of any association expressly formed for these purposes [of documenting events and people in history], prior to the institution of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, in the year 1815."³ In March of that year a Committee of History, Moral Science and Literature was added to the six existing Philosophical Society committees focused on the physical and mathematical sciences.⁴ Several of the men who would later found the Historical Society were among its members. In the collecting strategy practiced during the early nineteenth century, the committee sent letters and broadsides to Philosophical Society members and the general public asking for information on a variety of historical topics. To encourage greater response, personalized requests were sent to leaders in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. The corresponding secretary's three letter books for this period document forty-two correspondents, from Thomas Jefferson in Virginia to Charles Thomson, the secretary of the Continental Congress, who had retired to Lower Merion in Montgomery County just west of Philadelphia.⁵ Reports of the Historical Committee to the Philosophical Society record the initial successes of these efforts, adding, for example, the Lewis and Clark expedition notebooks and a copy of the Declaration of Independence in Jefferson's hand from that donor alone to the Philosophical Society's collections.⁶ An observer would later note, "Of the nature and extent of their collections the public at large has not yet had the opportunity of judging, although it is known . . . that 'they have succeeded in collecting ample and precious materials. . . .'"⁷ By August of 1820 the increasingly sparse committee minutes ceased. A twentieth-century president of the Historical Society, author of its two-volume centennial history and my partner in this review, the Honorable Hampton L. Carson, concludes, in his typically light and succinct style, "The Historical Committee was but a graft upon an uncongenial trunk, and it withered from lack of proper nutritive contact."⁸ But William Rawle, the first president of the Historical Society, himself a member of the short-lived Historical Committee of the American Philosophical Society, said that it failed because it was restricted to Philosophical Society members and that membership itself was already a severely restricted group.⁹

Although lacking a historical society, Philadelphia in 1820 was second only to New York in population (63,800) and was home to many special interest groups. To the proprietary libraries and learned societies established in the eighteenth century, such as the Library Company of

Philadelphia (founded in 1731) and the American Philosophical Society (founded in 1780), nineteenth-century Philadelphia's intellectually lively and interested citizens added the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1805, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in 1812, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia in 1814, and The Franklin Institute of the State of Pennsylvania for the Promotion of the Mechanical Arts in 1824. Only one state history, Robert Proud's *History of Pennsylvania* covering from 1681 to 1742,¹⁰ was among the many Philadelphia imprints on the shelves of the six proprietary libraries¹¹ that served the needs of the city's avid readers. Eleven daily papers, six magazines, and four medical journals were published in this former national capital. Eighty-eight houses of worship could be found in the grid of Philadelphia's streets that stretched from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill, from Vine Street to Cedar (South Street), where there were also fifteen breweries, five theaters, and four public baths.¹²

In the early 1820s—when the Historical Society of Pennsylvania would be formed—the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence approached. Lafayette's national tour would soon remind the new American citizens of their successful revolution and also, as they hosted the sixty-six-year-old French general, that first-person recollections of that time would soon not be available. In January 1824, Congress responded positively to President James Monroe's request to invite General Lafayette to visit the United States.¹³ Six weeks following his disembarking in New York harbor, he arrived in Philadelphia "after reviewing . . . near Kensington, six thousand troops."¹⁴ It was a memorable week, from 28 September to 6 October, of festivities and entertainments. In what HSP historian Carson called a "patriotic awakening,"¹⁵ and certainly a highlight of this visit, Lafayette approached Independence Hall, then called the State House, at the end of a parade which passed through thirteen triumphal arches designed by William Strickland. The last, the Grand Civic Arch, was crowned at its thirty-five-foot top with sculptor William Rush's statues of *Justice* and *Wisdom* and Thomas Sully's painting of Philadelphia's coat of arms.¹⁶ It spanned Chestnut Street in front of Independence Hall where over a hundred thousand citizens of the new republic are said to have waited.¹⁷ Inside Independence Hall stood Rush's six-foot statue of George Washington.¹⁸ Adding to the evidences of the new nation was the Franklin Institute's first exhibition of the products of American industry in nearby Carpenter's Hall.¹⁹

For those interested in history, public attention to the past that fall of 1824 must have been encouraging, if not inspiring. A month after Lafayette's visit, eighteen history enthusiasts met to commemorate, for the

first time, the anniversary of William Penn's landing in 1682 and to organize the Society for the Commemoration of the Landing of William Penn. Because they met to celebrate the 142nd anniversary, not the 140th or 150th, it is reasonable to assume that the heightened consciousness of history that fall stimulated this particular occasion. As later reported by the press, "an address full of the fire of the patriot and the taste of the scholar" recounting Penn's virtues was given at three o'clock, prior to the subscription dinner held in Penn's former dwelling, Doyle's Hotel.²⁰ The speaker thought it appropriate that "we not only pay a just debt of gratitude, but we raise and *exalt the character* and dignity of our own State, which came into existence, rose and flourished under the auspices of that great man."²¹ Noting that the landing of the Pilgrims was celebrated annually in Massachusetts, he regretted that the anniversary of Penn's landing had never been commemorated.

A century and a half has not yet elapsed since that memorable landing took place which may be said to have given birth to this great state; and a rapid succession of astonishing events within the last fifty years, has drawn our attention from the past, to fix it upon the present. A WASHINGTON has appeared, who has given a new birth to an immense country, of which this State is only a part; this country, from dependent colonies, has become a great nation, and assumed a distinguished station among the powers of the earth. National feelings and national objects have made us for a while lose sight of local ones; and the honors of Pennsylvania have been merged in the glories of the United States of America.²²

The speaker acknowledged that the annual celebration of Washington's birthday was a "desired tribute"²³ and declared that the annual celebration of Penn's landing would also be appropriate homage. The annual festival, he suggested, should be celebrated in Pennsylvania and in Delaware, occurring alternately in New Castle, Delaware, "that witnessed the first landing of our common father and legislator," and in Chester, Pennsylvania, "then our capital."²⁴ This proposition was unanimously adopted and a committee appointed to form an association to accomplish this goal. The printed account of this meeting states that "The company then sat down to a sumptuous and well-served repast"²⁵ around a table decorated with a model of Haviland's monument of "the treaty tree" as a centerpiece. The speaker was seated in a chair which had been used by Penn and by James Logan. Two other chairs were believed to be made of the wood of the treaty elm, and other Penn-related relics were shown after dinner. Twenty-seven toasts were offered including, almost at the end, a salute to "The memory of Robert Proud, the annalist of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of many

valuable incidents of our early history. May his *posthumous* fame surpass his living reward."²⁶

One of the eighteen subscribers to the dinner wrote to a friend afterwards, "Our *Penn Dinner* has made a great stir, & is very popular. The Historical Soc'y will go on, & in short a new current of feeling seems to have set in, highly creditable to Penna. past, present & to come."²⁷ It would later be observed, "The Society to commemorate the landing of William Penn . . . [was] expressly confined to the subject designated by its title . . ." and was not comprehensive enough to become a historical society.²⁸ The two organizations were, however, regarded as sister societies, "Claiming a common birth-place—so nearly of the same age—alike in the principal traits of character." It was noted that the enthusiasm generated by Penn Society dinners could stimulate increased collecting for the Historical Society, which could provide the programs for the Penn Society's special occasions; the two societies could thus complement each other.²⁹ The importance of collections and of preserving evidence of past and present was a theme of discussion, perhaps due, as observed above, to the impending fiftieth anniversary of American Independence. James Barker wrote,

There is no time now to lose. While the most precious records are mouldering away in the neglected lumber room, every year, almost every day there passes to the tomb some sole depository of useful knowledge; leaving to his posterity only the vain regret of not having profited, in time, by the stores within his reach. We stand indeed, at a most critical point of time: much curious and valuable matter, attainable a few years past, has already, it is true, irrecoverably gone; much however yet exists, scattered through the community: but suffer a few more years to flit by, and nothing remains of authentic or credible tradition.³⁰

A note in the society's archives indicates that some of the seven young men, who would form the Historical Society of Pennsylvania within a month of the Penn Dinner, first met at least a year before.³¹ Those founding members were Benjamin H. Coates, Stephen Duncan, William Rawle, Jr., George Washington Smith, Roberts Vaux, Thomas I. Wharton, and Caspar Wistar, II. Rawle and Wistar were sons of members of the moribund Philosophical Society history committee; and Vaux and Wharton were members of the Penn Society. John Fanning Watson, early nineteenth-century collector and chronicler, was recently credited as working "behind the scenes in the early 1820s to induce a group of Philadelphia's patrician leaders to establish a historical society."³² Study of Watson's life, and of his correspondence with society founder Roberts Vaux, in particular, do not support that claim but rather suggest that

Watson's relatively loose association with the Historical Society was due to Vaux's urging him to give his manuscript history of Philadelphia to the society rather than to either the Library Company of Philadelphia or the Historical Committee of the Philosophical Society as the author had initially promised to do.³³ In his 1864 history of the society, founder Dr. Benjamin H. Coates, noted that "It was well understood that the late eminent William Rawle, Sr., and John F. Watson, though personally absent, were to be considered as present, and they are therefore in the category of foundation members."³⁴

By 2 December 1824, when this group of seven met again, sufficient enthusiasm existed to appoint a committee of three to draft a constitution and bylaws.³⁵ A draft was approved at the next meeting on 27 December. At the third meeting in February, William Rawle, Sr., was elected president. A prominent lawyer of long standing in Philadelphia, Rawle was "closely associated with the charitable, educational, artistic and intellectual activities of his day." He served as a director of the Library Company of Philadelphia, a trustee for forty years of the University of Pennsylvania, a president of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery and the Improvement of the Condition of the African Race, a founder of the Academy of the Fine Arts, and contributed time and interest to a variety of other cultural and educational organizations.³⁶ That spring, he accepted the presidency of the new historical society on the condition that its membership be broadened from *natives* of Pennsylvania, as suggested in the draft constitution, to *residents* of Pennsylvania. From President Rawle's first meeting in May 1825 until November, the membership, now over twenty-five, debated amendments to that draft, including a broadened membership put forward by the president.³⁷ Pennsylvania, it should be noted, had the most democratic state constitution at this time: it enfranchised all "freemen of the full age of twenty-one years, having resided in this state for the space of one whole year next before the election of representative, and paid public taxes during that time."³⁸

On 7 November 1825, the constitution of eight articles was approved. The first two articles established the object of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania to be "the elucidation of the natural, civil, and literary history of this state."³⁹ The third article presented the conclusion of the eight-month debate on membership: the *first* class of contributing members was defined as consisting of persons residing [*i.e.*, having lived for at least ten years] "in the city of Philadelphia, or the State of Pennsylvania, within ten miles of the city. The *second* [corresponding members], of persons residing in any other part of Pennsylvania. The *third* class [honorary members], of persons residing in any part of America or

elsewhere, and females may be admitted into it."⁴⁰ John, Granville, and Richard Penn in England top the first list of honorary members, "General La Fayette, La Grange, (France)," the second list for 1825.⁴¹

Article IV prescribed the officers as a president, four vice-presidents (two of whom had to be residents of Philadelphia city or county), a treasurer, a corresponding secretary, a recording secretary, and a curator, all to be elected annually. The fifth article created an annually elected council of thirteen members to meet monthly to conduct the business of the society. The nine officers were named *ex officio* members of the council; contributing members of the society were entitled to attend council meetings. The program of the society, outlined in Article VI, included quarterly meetings at which the council would report on the acquisitions and transactions of the previous quarter. Although council was given the responsibility of appointing the member who would deliver the "annual discourse," papers—referred to as dissertations—could be read by any of the members at any of the meetings. Nonmembers, awkwardly identified as strangers, could come to the annual discourse.⁴² The seventh article gave the council power to elect contributing, corresponding, and honorary members. The vote had to be nearly unanimous as only three negative votes would prevent the election of any candidate. The eighth article provided for amendment of the constitution at any quarterly meeting of the society provided that notice had been given at the prior meeting.⁴³ Nineteen subscribers were named as charter members of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; its constitution was approved by the attorney general of the commonwealth on 27 January 1826, and the society was chartered on 2 June of that year.⁴⁴

A year before the laborious but necessary business of legal organization was completed, and a few weeks before Lafayette's second visit to Philadelphia (17 July-25 July 1825), a printed circular announced the objectives of the new society:

To trace all the circumstances of its early settlement—its successful progress and its present state;—to collect all the documents and written or printed evidence, and all the traditionary information that may still be attainable; and, after having thus acquired possession of sufficient materials, it will be the office of one or more committees to select what may be deemed generally interesting and instructive, to methodize and arrange it, and to lay it in a proper form before the public.⁴⁵

Contributions to the society's collections were urged, and a lengthy list suggested the kinds of original materials and copies of records desired.

As it is the intention of the Society to form an ample library and cabinet, it will gratefully receive all donations of books, pamphlets, or manuscripts, on any subject or of any date; medals, coins, or any other article deriving value from historical or biographical affinities: Indian idols, ornaments, arms, or utensils, etc.⁴⁶

President Rawle alone sent 185 copies of this circular across the state, to other states, and to England.⁴⁷

Energetic efforts to build the society's collections included solicitations of institutions as well as of individuals. News reached Philadelphia in the spring of 1825 that the collections of the New-York Historical Society were to be sold to satisfy creditors. After unsuccessful efforts that summer to determine what Pennsylvania materials might be in that trove, President Rawle wrote to his New York counterpart in September inquiring as to whether anything appropriate from that society's collection might be purchased. It does not appear that any accessions came from this source. A request to the American Philosophical Society for its Pennsylvania materials, or for copies of them, was refused.⁴⁸

To organize its members for active collecting, the history of Pennsylvania was divided into ten subdivisions, and ten standing committees were appointed. The topics identified were: (1) the first settlers, their national origins, early difficulties and "domestic habits"; (2) the founder of Pennsylvania and his family; (3) biographical notices of distinguished persons; (4) the "Aborigines of Pennsylvania, their numbers, names of their tribes, intercourse with Europeans, their language, habits, characters, and wars"; (5) the reasons for the rapid growth of Pennsylvania in population; (6) the provincial government; (7) juridical history; (8) literary history; (9) medical history; and (10) "the progress and present state of Agriculture, Manufactures, and Commerce."⁴⁹ Two days before the 7 November meeting at which the constitution was approved, a special meeting of the society was called for delivery of President Rawle's inaugural discourse. As his democratic views concerning eligibility for membership had caused lively debate, that portion of his address has become best known:

The members of an historical society ought to be numerous, perhaps unlimited. All who feel a strong interest in its general views ought to be admissible, and every inhabitant of our state ought to feel that interest.⁵⁰

But Rawle's views on collecting also have a very contemporary ring:

Let no opportunity be lost for throwing into the common stock, not only what may be collected of times that are past, but whatever may be of interest in relation to time that is present.⁵¹

"Advertisement to the First Edition," the frontispiece written in December 1825 for the society's first publication, explained that "The Society does not undertake to compose a history; its desire is to collect materials for history."⁵² Because of the variety of special societies in Philadelphia by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Historical Society could concentrate on history. Natural history, scientific material, and art had existing institutional stewards in the Academy of Natural Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.

The contents of the first two volumes of the society's *Memoirs*, each published in two parts (Volume I in 1826 and 1827 and Volume II in 1827 and 1830), indicate the interests of the new organization and document which of the standing committees were most active. The annual discourse appears first, occupying approximately 14 percent of Volume I and 19 percent of Volume II; the subject of the first was the Historical Society; the second, "the conduct of our founder toward the Indian natives."⁵³ Publication of documents, including state records and transcriptions from London, was a priority—four occupy 21 percent of Volume I; seven, 15 percent of Volume II. Over one-fifth of both volumes is devoted to the colonial period and William Penn. Although articles about Indians appear in both, the only one on Negroes is in Volume I. Biographical sketches appear in both volumes with two articles in Volume I, three in Volume II. While the literature committee produced a paper for both volumes, the medical history committee's efforts only grace Volume I. Quite modest discussions of natural resources—coal and minerals—fill 2 percent of both volumes. The footnotes and references in both of these volumes of *Memoirs* indicate thorough use of the early histories published by the Massachusetts Historical Society and the New-York Historical Society.

In addition to his organizational labors to begin the new historical society, President Rawle contributed articles to both volumes. During the 1830s his involvement with the society became less vigorous as his health declined. William Rawle died in the spring of 1836, aged 76, having served as president of the society for eleven years. The Council met monthly that year but had a quorum present only once; the new president was not selected quickly.⁵⁴ A second senior statesman (aged 77), also a lawyer, was elected, a man prominently connected with history as with other scholarly interests in Philadelphia—Peter S. DuPonceau. A native of France, he had come to America as secretary and translator for Baron Steuben and had

retired from the army in 1781 to become an American citizen, study law, and be admitted to the bar in 1785.⁵⁵ Most important for the early history of the Historical Society, he had been central to its precursors. If there was a movement toward interest in the past in Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century, DuPonceau set the beat and sustained the rhythm. A member of the Philosophical Society, he was the most active member of its Historical Committee; he was president for the occasion of the first dinner to commemorate Penn's landing and he was the speaker. Although not a founder of the Historical Society, he was a member and was listed in one of the ten collecting committees in 1825; he was a member of council in 1830.⁵⁶

DuPonceau's inaugural discourse summarized the accomplishments of the young society. Ever the collector, he began by noting the valuable documents "illustrating the early history of our commonwealth" which had been discovered and saved.⁵⁷ His second, third, and fourth points related to publishing: documents, papers (memoirs) by members, and the publication of histories. Specifically noted as the society's fifth accomplishment was joining with the American Philosophical Society in convincing the legislature to publish Pennsylvania's provincial records. In conclusion he summarized,

We are not historians; our station, though respectable, is of humbler degree. Our first duty is to collect and preserve materials for future history, and to elucidate historical facts, which have become obscure by the operation of time. . . . Of the events which now take place . . . All we have to do with respect to these is to collect them . . . and preserve them in a safe repository. . . .⁵⁸

This useful summary of the society's history in DuPonceau's inaugural discourse was published in 1840 in the first part of Volume IV of the *Memoirs*. The second part of that volume, published in 1845, contained a circular soliciting gifts to the society's collection about "your township or section of country . . ." ⁵⁹ offering intriguing evidence of thematic collecting. Unfortunately, yet predictably, the elderly DuPonceau's presidency was not a long one. At the time of his death in April 1844, he was president of three institutions: the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.⁶⁰ All three of these organizations were housed in the same building, the Philosophical Society's Hall, where the Historical Society had rented a small room upstairs since its founding in 1825.⁶¹ At the end of April, however, the Historical Society moved to the upstairs room of another building several blocks away. Although the long-desired move to a private

room does not appear to be related to DuPonceau's death, it was assisted by half of his \$200 legacy, which paid for a bookcase, carpet, table, chairs, and other furnishings.⁶² In 1846, when the Athenaeum began its new building, the Historical Society appointed a committee to rent a room; the Athenaeum's generous terms made this possible.⁶³ The following description of the Historical Society in one of the speeches on the opening day of the Athenaeum's new hall summarizes its reputation at that time:

One of the apartments, immediately over us, is to be occupied by the Historical Society; kindred, in some measure, in purpose with ours. This valuable Institution, known to, or at least duly appreciated by, I am afraid, only a small portion of our community, has been in existence for about twenty-two years; and although suffering from penury, both in numbers and in purse, it has done great service to the history and character of our Commonwealth, by the valuable contributions which have enriched its Transactions; by the republication of scarce tracts; and by the collection and preservation of pamphlets, which might otherwise have perished. The fact that this valuable Society is very inadequately supported; that its narrow income, barely sufficient for the most economical disbursements, is derived exclusively from the small annual contributions of its members, most of them young men and professional persons of very moderate means; that it has no endowments and no capital fund; is, I regret to say, anything but creditable to Philadelphia.⁶⁴

That characterization, which has remained descriptive of the society, some would observe, to this day, was made by Thomas I. Wharton, one of its founders, and therefore an individual speaking from personal knowledge and long acquaintance. DuPonceau's successor in the presidency of the Historical Society was Thomas Sergeant, a prominent judge who served the society from 1845 to 1858, but he was not as active as had been the organization's first two leaders.⁶⁵ These appear to have been, however, strengthening times for the Historical Society, which had about two hundred contributing members in the 1850s.

In 1849, the *Catalogue of the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Part I, History, Biography & Manuscripts* was published. The preface noted:

[The Historical Society of Pennsylvania] met for nineteen years in one of the rooms of the American Philosophical Society, and had the use of a small closet in this room to contain its books. In the year 1844 the Society removed to a room rented by itself for its exclusive accommodation. Its collection of books then amounted to about sixty volumes, in addition to some boxes of public documents from Washington, which had not been opened, as the Society had no place in which to place the books. Immediately after the removal, the library increased rapidly, and a still

further increase has followed its removal to their present location in the Athenaeum building, south Sixth street. The Library now amounts to about 1750 volumes, divided into ten classes, History, Biography, Manuscripts, Pamphlets, Periodicals, Voyages and Travels, Newspapers, Public Documents of Pennsylvania, Public Documents of the United States, and Miscellaneous. These observations have been considered necessary to explain why a Society twenty-four years in existence, has not a larger collection of books.

The first unit of this shelflist itemizes forty-seven volumes on the British Isles and books on the American colonies, not just Pennsylvania. Shelf F contained publications of other historical societies, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Virginia, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, and some counties and towns. The second unit was biography containing seven shelves of books. The fifty volumes in the manuscript section included private papers, minute books, receipt books, and Revolutionary War orderly books. A handwritten resolution tipped into the society's bound copy of the first thirty-six-page catalog notes that it was "read with much enjoyment and astonishment." Calling it the "greatest report . . . ever read," the resolution calls for it to "be preserved in a 'glasscase' among the archives and other treasures of the Society." "This report," the resolution enthusiastically concludes, "will make a noise."

On the crescendo of this accomplishment, in the twenty-fifth year of the Historical Society, let me give brief mention of other historical societies in the state in the antebellum era. There were three early attempts to establish a historical society in western Pennsylvania. The 1834 minute book of the first effort noted: "We appear to the stranger who visits us to be absorbed in the pursuit of wealth, totally forgetful that knowledge is necessary to happiness." Organizational efforts in 1843 and in 1858 were equally unsuccessful.⁶⁶ The Historical Society of Pennsylvania had four corresponding members from Pittsburgh in 1825 and others from the western portion of the state, which might not have helped the early efforts to found a historical society in that frontier community.

One of the HSP's members was, however, instrumental in strengthening the Moravian Historical Society. The first meeting of persons interested in forming a society to preserve information related to the early history of the Brethren's Church in America was held in March 1857 in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, which had opened to non-Moravians in 1856. Soon after its founding, the society sent letters to existing congregations in an attempt to gather collections. In its first year the Moravian Historical Society attracted the "active sympathy" of John Jordan, Jr., of Philadelphia, an HSP councilor,⁶⁷ who became a patron and donor of Whitefield House,⁶⁸ still its headquarters. By the end of its first

year, this organization had "7 life members, 25 active members, a library of nearly 500 volumes, and a small collection of relics in the museum."⁶⁹

The third oldest historical society in Pennsylvania was organized in February 1858 during the fiftieth anniversary of "burning the Wyoming Anthracite Coal in a domestic grate" in the old Fell Tavern on Northampton Street in Wilkes-Barre.⁷⁰ This experiment had been conducted by Jesse Fell on 11 February 1808. The Wyoming Historical & Geological Society was organized to cover the original limits of Luzerne country (1858) extending over the entire counties of Luzerne, Wyoming, and Lackawanna. It was incorporated 10 May 1858.⁷¹

Thus, though there were some historical stirrings in other parts of Pennsylvania in the antebellum period, by far the greatest activity had taken place in Philadelphia. In 1864, the trustees of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania reprinted the first volume of the *Memoirs*. It began with a sketch of the history of the society by one of its founders, Dr. Benjamin H. Coates, "reprinted from a pamphlet recently published by the Society," probably in celebration of its fortieth anniversary.⁷² He describes its holdings as "7000 volumes; and a handsome collection of portraits of Governors of the State and of other distinguished individuals, with several landscape views of interesting localities. . . ; the number of valuable relics in its possession is . . . still growing. . . ."⁷³ No state funding is noted. The sketch concludes with a gracefully stated appeal for contributions to the library. "For the erection of a fire-proof hall, too, a 'Building Fund' has been commenced, for which twenty-five hundred dollars have been collected. . . ."⁷⁴ "The Publication Fund was commenced in 1854" [the society's thirtieth anniversary], he continues, "and now amounts to upwards of seventeen thousand dollars . . ." in a trust fund. Coates ends the sketch with information on how to subscribe to the Publication Fund and a list of the three works that were published after 1854: *The History of Braddock's Expedition* (1856), *Contributions to American History* (1858), and *Record of Upland, and Denny's Military Journal* (1860). *The History of the Town of Bethlehem, and of the Moravian Settlements in Northeastern Pennsylvania* was in preparation.⁷⁵

In the next chapter of the society's history, from 1864 to 1904, it would purchase property (1883) and begin to build its fireproof hall at 1300 Locust Street, which is still its address. The library and collections would grow, primarily through continued contributions but also through careful purchases. Carson reported that "On the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Society in 1874, there were a total of 1541 members: life members 307, resident members (Phila.) 716, non-resident (Pa.) 198, non-resident (in other states) 279, foreign members, 41."⁷⁶ The American

Library Association would be founded in the society's library in 1876 during the Centennial Fair. In 1877 the HSP would begin to publish what is believed to be the oldest continuous scholarly magazine of history, the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*; and it would continue to publish books and monographs. A group of its members would found the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania in 1893, helping the collection of biographical information on individuals and families to become the third largest genealogical library in the United States, the largest on the East coast.⁷⁷

From the 1860s to 1994, over 300 historical societies would be founded in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Based upon a simple survey of founding dates conducted while researching this paper, it appears that about half of these have been founded since 1970. Before World War II, most were county historical societies with a half dozen denominational history societies begun in the mid-nineteenth century. With the apparent exception of the Germantown Historical Society (1900), historical societies for towns and cities appear infrequently until the 1940s, and they are still being organized. Regional historical societies proliferated in the '60s and '70s, and local societies, during the '80s. Based on the over 50 percent response rate to this survey, it appears that the subject area for new historical societies has narrowed to encompass smaller geographical areas and more specific subject matter with each passing decade.

What does all this mean? The papers from the North Carolina Collection's Sesquicentennial Conference will add to an interesting collection of theories and histories of the institutional development of historical societies on the state level. My major source has been Hampton Carson, who wrote his two-volume history of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania between its 100th anniversary in 1924 and his death in 1929. Following the interests of his era, his treatment is generally chronological and places heavy emphasis on biography and family history. Carson tells "a story of steady progress" and "unselfish services" to create an "unrivaled mine of material," which has "enormous value to our civic life."⁷⁸

In 1932, one of my distinguished predecessors, Julian Boyd, in pondering why historical societies began, looked first at the spirit of inquiry in the eighteenth century and the formation of learned societies and academies,⁷⁹ followed by the development of societies devoted to history in England and in France in the early nineteenth century. Boyd credits the Puritan homage to order and to predestination, as documented by history, as the reason for the early founding of historical societies in New England and, with the migration of New Englanders, the beginning of historical societies in neighboring states.⁸⁰ "The feeling of patriotism speeded their

growth"⁸¹ in the new nation, Boyd acknowledges, but it didn't cause the growth of historical societies. That cause, he maintains, was the New Englanders' desire to order and organize both past and present.

A quarter of a century later in 1958, Walter Muir Whitehill embarked on a study of independent historical societies sponsored by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Virginia Historical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society. The reason for Whitehill's landmark study was the financial distress of these societies in an environment characterized by the entrance of many organizations—such as university libraries, private libraries, historical museums and restorations—to the field of American history. Rather than ponder the reason why the older historical societies were founded, Whitehill supports their mission as collecting, preserving, publishing, and making available to scholars the "source materials of American history."⁸²

Twenty-five years later, in 1989, the historians advising the Historical Society on its landmark exhibition, "Finding Philadelphia's Past: Visions and Revisions," looked at the society's past and the motivations of its founders and saw elitism and exclusivity. "In the main, they were sorely troubled by the sprawling, turbulent, heterogeneous character of the industrializing nineteenth-century cities, and they considered the collecting of books, manuscripts, and objects of the past a way to restore some sense—their own sense—of unity and order through the presentation of a history of a less trammled, more virtuous, and less materialistic era."⁸³ This vision of Whig values is illustrated by discussion of John F. Watson's antiquarian interests but is not supported by study of the society's publications and collections, which reveal a more egalitarian record of interests. Thus each generation reinterprets the past.

Now, sixty to seventy years after Carson and Boyd sat at the same metal tables in the reading room of the society's fireproof hall at 1300 Locust Street, I sit there reviewing the same publications, daydreaming out the same windows. Other readers in the room use a few of the estimated 16 million items saved by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for posterity. History today is quite personal. The society serves individuals, who struggle to know themselves through learning more about their families, their houses, their neighborhoods. The individual is the denominator of what is studied now as it was with what was studied in the society's early years. I think historical societies develop as memories—focused by anniversaries and other stimuli—as memories of states, of counties, of towns, of neighborhoods, of communities; as memories for individuals. And these memories identify the place and each of us in that place.

The truth is, a place is more than half memory. No place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history. . . .

ENDNOTES

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3. William Rawle, "Inaugural Discourse," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (1864 ed.), vol. 1, p. 38.
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9. Rawle, "Inaugural Discourse," p. 39.
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19. Henry Butler Allen, "The Franklin Institute of the State of Pennsylvania," *Historic Philadelphia From the Founding until the Early Nineteenth Century: Papers Dealing with its People and Buildings* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), p. 278.
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22. *Proceedings . . . 1824*, pp. 9-10.
23. *Proceedings . . . 1824*, p. 10.
24. *Proceedings . . . 1824*, p. 11.
25. *Proceedings . . . 1824*, p. 14.
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28. Rawle, "Inaugural Discourse," p. 39.
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30. Barker, *Sketches of the Primitive Settlements*, p. 8.
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33. Deborah Dependahl Waters, "Philadelphia's Boswell: John Fanning Watson," *PMHB* 98 (1974): 13-14; Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, pp. 110-13.
34. Coates, "The Historical Society of Pennsylvania," p. x.
35. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, p. 53.
36. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, p. 91.
37. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, pp. 55-57.
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39. "Constitution of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," *Memoirs*, vol. 1 (1864 ed.), p. 14.
40. When the by-laws were revised in 1874, it was specifically noted that "women shall be eligible for membership." *Charter and By-Laws of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania with a List of the Officers and of the Members of the Executive Council, Since the Organization of the Society*, (Philadelphia: By the Society, 1880), p. 17; bound in *Miscellaneous Publications of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 4.
41. "Members of the Historical Society, Newly Elected," *Memoirs*, vol. 1 (1864 ed.) p. 466.
42. Fifty years later, when the by-laws were revised, there was nothing about the annual discourse or about who could attend meetings. *Charter and By-Laws . . . since the Organization of the Society*, *op. cit.*
43. "Constitution," *Memoirs*, vol. 1 (1864 ed.) p. 16.
44. The charter members were Edward Bettle, Benjamin H. Coates, Joseph Hopkinson, Charles Jared Ingersoll, Thomas C. James, William M. Meredith, Thomas McKean Pettit, Gerard Ralston, William Rawle, William Rawle, Jr., Joseph Reed, John Sergeant, Daniel B. Smith, George Washington Smith, Roberts Vaux, William Mason Walmsley, Thomas I. Wharton, Thomas H. White, and Caspar Wistar. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, pp. 59-60.
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46. "Circular," *Memoirs*, pp. 24-25.
47. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, p. 109.
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49. "Standing Committees," *Memoirs*, pp. 18-20.

50. Rawle, "Inaugural Discourse," p. 39.
51. Rawle, "Inaugural Discourse," p. 84.
52. *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. v.
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57. Peter S. DuPonceau, "Inaugural Discourse," *Memoirs*, 4 (1840), pt. 1, p. 21.
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67. H. A. Jacobson, "History of the Moravian Historical Society, 1857-1907," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 8, pts. 1-3 (1909): 30.

68. Robert H. Brennecke, "A Centennial Survey of the Moravian Historical Society 1857 to 1957," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 16, pt. 4 (1957): 143.
69. Brennecke, "Centennial Survey," p. 142. Although the Presbyterian Historical Society, organized in 1852 at the General Assembly meeting in Charleston, S.C., has its headquarters in Philadelphia, it does not appear to be heavily Pennsylvania-oriented. See *Journal of Presbyterian History* 55 (1977): 1.
70. *History of the Wyoming Historical & Geological Society* (Wilkes-Barre: By the Society, 1913), p. 3.
71. *History of the Wyoming*. . . , p. 3.
72. Coates, "The Historical Society," p. ix.
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74. Coates, "The Historical Society, p. xii.
75. Coates, "The Historical Society," p. xiii.
76. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, p. 429.
77. The Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, is recognized as the largest genealogical collection; the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the second largest.
78. Carson, *History of the Historical Society*, vol. 1, pp. xv-xviii.
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80. Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," p. 15.
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Virginia

Charles F. Bryan, Jr.

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In preparing a paper on the early history of collecting at the Virginia Historical Society, it was not easy for me to come up with something that has not been written or said many times before. Indeed, the history of the society has been well-documented and analyzed. Walter Muir Whitehill devoted a large chapter to the Virginia Historical Society in his seminal study of American independent historical societies. A few years later, William Rachal, editor of our *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, wrote a full account of the origins of the VHS. The most complete history of the society was written by former associate director Virginius C. Hall to mark the 150th anniversary of our institution in 1981.¹

Without fail, each of these histories refers to the distinguished early leadership of the institution. The narrative goes something like this: On a cold December day in 1831, a group of prominent men from all parts of Virginia gathered in the House of Delegates in Richmond. One of these men, John Floyd, served as governor of the commonwealth. Others included two former congressmen, sixteen members of the General Assembly, a former minister to Spain, several prominent attorneys, a leading newspaper editor, a professor from the University of Virginia, and the president of Hampden-Sydney College, the latter of whom was the only non-Virginian in the group. Maybe it should come as no surprise that the non-Virginian, Peter Cushing, was a New Englander, and he played a key role in creating a new institution.

After several hours of deliberation, the group determined to create the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society. Its object would be "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil,

and literary history of this state; and to patronize and advance all those sciences which have a direct tendency to promote the best interests of its citizens." Understanding full well then as we do today that good names on a board of trustees can add instant credibility to an institution, the group elected Chief Justice John Marshall as its first president. As Virginius Hall discreetly points out: "Marshall took little part in [the society's] affairs," thus becoming the first celebrity to serve on our board in little more than name.²

Although the standard histories of the society are interesting to read, one fundamental question is missing from the narratives. Just why was the Virginia Historical Society created? One answer is that Virginia was simply following the example of other states. New Englander Peter Cushing was familiar with Jeremy Belknap's work, especially his founding of the Massachusetts Historical Society. This group of well-read men was aware of the historical societies that had sprung up in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. A good dose of state pride helped motivate these Virginia gentlemen to make certain that the states north of the Mason-Dixon line not have a monopoly on historical societies. But I think that answer is only part of the reason. There was another motivation, a profound one that becomes evident when reading accounts of the early deliberations of the Historical Society. Based on extensive research conducted in recent years by David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly for a major exhibition on Virginia and the Westward Movement, I have developed an additional conclusion: The men who founded the society sought to preserve the memory of Virginia's greatness, which, with good reason, they believed was fading rapidly. In the organizational meeting, several speakers noted the importance of not forgetting the legacy of Virginia's glorious past, especially the Revolution. Indeed, at the end of the Revolution, Virginia was at its zenith—by far the largest, most populous, and wealthiest state of the infant nation. Its influence on early national politics and government was virtually unmatched. Of the first five United States presidents, four were Virginians, in many ways seeming to confirm the Old Dominion's status as the most powerful element of the United States. But all was not well.³

In reality Virginia had entered an era of steep decline. An extended agricultural depression devastated Virginia's planters. Three presidents of the Virginia Dynasty—Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe—all had their final years clouded by the specter of insolvency. Soil exhaustion in the Tidewater became chronic. Jefferson's own Piedmont country was described as "worn out." Large portions of the western counties were unimproved. In the Old Dominion, land values dropped from \$207 million

in 1817 to merely \$90 million in 1829. For many, the only thing to do was to leave Virginia, and they did by the hundreds of thousands. In 1823, Elizabeth Trist wrote her famous brother Nicholas: "The times are dreadful. . . , if we may judge from the numbers that are migrating to different parts of the continent. Scarce a day passes that families are not going to Alabama, Missoura [*sic*], or some of those places." Branch Archer, who moved to Texas, wrote his sisters: "Virginia is waning fast. Tell Uncle Powell . . . to quit her as rats quit sinking vessels, and take a house in this land of promise, where he will find what he found in Virginia forty years past in her halcyon days."⁴

The great migration began soon after the Revolution. Of the white children born in Virginia around 1800, about a third moved away. Thirty percent of the state's slaves left as Virginia became the largest exporter of slaves to the Deep South. All told, more than one million people moved out of the Old Dominion between the end of the Revolution and the beginning of the Civil War. In 1830, John Randolph of Roanoke complained that Virginia had an incurable case of "galloping consumption." To him Virginia was like King Lear, "an old and feeble monarch" abandoned by its children. A matter of months before the founding of the Virginia Historical Society, Thomas Jefferson's grandson, Francis Eppes, complained to a friend: "Our children may grow rich under a different system, but we will never witness better times—here."⁵

These gloomy feelings were infectious, and they hung as a pall over the proceedings of the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830. Although the main purpose of the convention was to address the question of unequal representation raised by the western counties, an inordinate amount of discussion centered on the bleeding of Virginia. William Leigh asked: "Whither, in the language of [Patrick] Henry, has the Genius of Virginia fled?" He provided his own answer: "Of all the old States, none has contributed more to the peopling of the new States than Virginia." And he acknowledged that "Virginia has declined, and is declining—she once was the first state in the Union—now she has sunk to third, and will soon sink lower on the scale." Indeed, Leigh was right. By 1860, Virginia dropped to fifth in population, a decline that continued until the end of the century. Several other delegates at this meeting expressed deep concern over what was happening to Virginia. It is worth noting that of the twenty-three men who gathered several months later to form the Virginia Historical Society in the same room that the Constitutional Convention met, all but four had been delegates to the Convention of 1829-1830.⁶

While elected officials wrung their hands over the crisis facing their state, a formal literature of decline developed in Virginia during this period

with the publication of several fictional accounts of family tragedy. A good example is George Tucker's *Valley of The Shenandoah*, published in 1824. In it, Edward Grayson returns to his Virginia home where "the sight of this venerable seat of his ancestors reminded him of the fall of his family from their former opulence and consequence to the most absolute poverty." Though Grayson was a fictional character, the sadness expressed was closer to truth than fiction, and his story was repeated many times in reality. And in many ways, George Tucker's story of Grayson served as a metaphor for the Old Dominion.⁷

I think that it is no coincidence that George Tucker played a key role in the founding of the Virginia Historical Society. For when the group of men gathered in December 1831 to create the society, George Tucker was the first speaker to rise and proclaim the need for a historical society in Virginia. He harked back to Virginia's glory days some fifty years earlier—proclaiming with some degree of pride: "Perhaps I do not go too far in saying that her influence, by reason of her greater population, her greater proportion of educated men, was greater than all the other states put together," save Massachusetts. But Tucker knew, as did every other man in that room, that those days were gone. He then stressed the importance of gathering materials from the revolutionary era. "Every thing connected with it, or shedding the smallest degree of light on it, will be regarded with veneration," he argued. He then concluded with the observation that Massachusetts and New York had set examples by establishing historical societies, and that Virginia would be remiss if it did not follow suit.⁸

Deliberations at subsequent meetings of the infant Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society confirmed a sense of urgency in preserving the memory of a once glorious past. James M. Garnett argued with zeal that the new organization would greatly enlighten the citizens of Virginia and help the commonwealth emerge from its current woes. By establishing the Historical Society, Garnett proclaimed that "Our beloved state would—ere long—be effectually rescued from her present danger of sinking in the grand scale . . . below the station to which her former glory . . . so justly entitles her." Another member proclaimed in a public letter announcing the formation of the Historical Society that "the Old Dominion had awakened from her lethargy." He then urged leading citizens to support the society so that Virginia could "hold that elevated standing among her sister states, to which her natural resources, moral worth, and past achievements in securing our civil and religious freedom, so entitle her."⁹

The repeated references in these early documents to a strong sense

of urgency in salvaging a glorious past and the expressed hope that somehow this institution would help slow down the decline of Virginia are important points. They are particularly relevant in understanding the reasons for the founding of the Virginia Historical Society and then its initial collecting efforts. Were these factors unique to Virginia? I think not.

Wendell Garrett's essay on early American historical societies published recently in *Sotheby's Preview* observes that the majority of these early societies developed in the eastern seaboard states, all of which were experiencing the out-migration of their citizens to the west. The people of these states were going through dramatic, and in many cases, depressing changes. Change always brings feelings of loss, and it is not surprising that organizations began to spring up to advocate holding on to a splendid past. And exactly what was the magnificent past to these early organizers? Without question it was the era of the Revolution and all of the great people associated with it. A prevailing atmosphere of piety toward American patriots had developed. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution were looked upon almost as holy scriptures. So the early historical societies placed special emphasis on collecting materials relating to the Revolution and the early republic. As George Tucker proclaimed at the organizational meeting of the Virginia Historical Society: "The time will come when our revolution will be looked at as the most important event in fixing the destinies of the hundreds of millions who inhabit this continent, and also in influencing those of all mankind."¹⁰

This belief of the central importance of the Revolution and events leading up to it clearly reflected a priority in the early collecting efforts of the Virginia Historical Society. An examination of the accession records reveals that in the first ten years of the society, almost half of the acquisitions were associated with the era of the Revolution. The first two manuscripts acquired by the society—one an account of a 1706 witch trial, the other an account of the Indian wars in western Virginia—did not relate to the Revolution, but the war was well-represented with other collections. These included such prize items as an order book kept by Virginia troops at Valley Forge, the pre-revolutionary war records of a group of Norfolk malcontents who styled themselves the Sons of Liberty, and a plan for the investment of Yorktown. And the society's president, John Marshall, donated the first book to the collection—an inscribed copy of his biography of Washington. In addition to collecting revolutionary-era materials, the early organizers sought the papers of prominent colonial families, royal governors, Virginia-born presidents, and they began to acquire early Virginia imprints and newspapers—especially those published in the

printing shops of Williamsburg.¹¹

One important factor should not be overlooked regarding the early collecting efforts of the Virginia Historical Society: Early acquisitions were not limited to manuscripts and printed matter. Indeed, the acquisition of three-dimensional objects was an important part of the initial collecting efforts. As was stated at the organizational meeting of the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society, the institution's purpose was "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, and literary history of this state."¹²

Housed originally in a room of the Richmond Academy of Medicine, an odd assortment of objects was arranged on shelves and in cabinets. Here were gathered the strange and wonderful, reflecting a good bit of interest in the natural and physical sciences. The trustees received a variety of mineral specimens—agates, Hawaiian garnets, and stalactites from Virginia caves. One of the first objects donated was described in the early records as "a sample of Uranium" from Cornwall. One only wonders how long this rather disquieting object may have emitted radiation in the society's rooms. A large piece of fungus that grew on a decayed sugar tree was received from western Virginia. One man donated a pistol with which John Smith was reputed to have slain a Turkish warrior in single combat some years before he set sail to Jamestown in 1607. This weapon, one of the society's most exciting early acquisitions, was proudly displayed for decades. Earlier this century, however, an expert discreetly informed the society's librarian that the pistol had been manufactured around 1750, some 130 years after Smith's death. The society continued to receive a variety of ore samples, but these gifts from Virginia's environment proved to be problematic, for soon the initial trickle of rock samples threatened to become a veritable avalanche, and the society began to rethink its role as the repository of the state's "natural history." Perhaps the final straw came in 1835, when a Dr. Dolbeare offered a bag of live rattlesnakes from Randolph County. The trustees declined. Eventually the decision was made to drop natural history and concentrate instead on the state's written, printed, and material history. To reflect this shift in focus, the name was soon shortened to the Virginia Historical Society.¹³

The organization's success in attracting these treasures turned out to be a hopeful portent of things to come, but, unfortunately, there were problems during this period. For that matter, the Virginia Historical Society came close to dying only a few years after its founding. One of its early members later identified a number of "defects" in the infant organization—infrequent meetings, a scattered and small membership, leaders whose time was severely limited, and the lack of a permanent home.

Indeed, finding a suitable home for collections became a serious problem. Initially the founders had envisioned sharing shelf space with the Virginia State Library, which had been created in 1821. And, in fact, the founding fathers elected the state librarian, William Harvie Richardson, as custodian of the society's library. Unfortunately, they did not inform the state librarian of this arrangement. For that matter he was not present at the initial meeting of the Historical Society. So for whatever reason, Richardson ignored the new society, and, in due course, he was eased out of a responsibility he had neither sought nor exercised. In fact, the state even refused to make any space in its downtown archives for the society's collections, thus beginning a rivalry that exists to some extent today. There is one major difference, however: the State Library did not collect three dimensional objects; the vast majority of its collections have been paper based.¹⁴

Obtaining a less than warm reception from the State Library, the Historical Society began an odyssey in search of a home to call its own that for all intents and purposes lasted another 128 years. After being refused space in the State Library, it settled in the upper floors of the Richmond Academy of Medicine. It moved shortly thereafter to a law building and then several months later to the Richmond Athenaeum, where space was provided rent free in exchange for opening its library to the citizens of Richmond without charge. This latter arrangement did not last long. For scarcely had the Historical Society moved into its new quarters when the city issued an eviction notice, explaining that it had decided to sell the building instead.¹⁵

The society moved a total of six times before the Civil War. Something else far more serious, however, plagued the institution—the age-old problem of money, or the lack of it. Virginia's continuing economic difficulties did nothing to help the infant society during these troubled years. An attempt to obtain an annual state appropriation failed in committee. The state was strapped financially. Following the annual meeting of 1838, the organization remained dormant for nearly a decade. "What has become of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Virginia?" asked Governor Thomas Gilmer in 1841 in a query in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. His letter elicited an informative response from the editor, Thomas Willis White: "We regret to understand from a source entitled to credit, that if it be not actually extinct, it is at least in a state of suspended animation." The Society would remain in "suspended animation" for another six years. Several of its members associated with the University of Virginia sought to move the society's base of operations to their institution in Charlottesville in 1846, but the measure was defeated. Early in the

following year, however, the society's executive committee, led by prominent attorney Conway Robinson, met at the Richmond Library and decided to arouse the institution from its sleep. Rooms were obtained in a new building near Capitol Square, and \$2,600 poured into the society's coffers, giving it some degree of financial security for the first time.¹⁶

For more than a decade, the Virginia Historical Society flourished, despite its nomadic existence. It was during this period that it launched a new collecting endeavor that would distinguish it from most other independent historical societies in the South—the acquisition of portraits. A year after the society's revitalization, an active member of the executive committee, Thomas Harding Ellis, donated the first portrait, a striking work by Charles Willson Peale depicting a young officer in Continental uniform. Although later authorities have expressed doubt that it represents the Marquis de Lafayette, as the donor asserted, it nevertheless is a remarkable painting. Other celebrated portraits followed in short order, the majority of which provided likenesses of revolutionary-era heroes—another Peale portrait (this one of Martha Washington); a striking portrait of Patrick Henry by Thomas Sully; and likenesses of Edmund Pendleton, George Washington, George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Peyton Randolph, and even a portrait of non-Virginian Benjamin Franklin. Not only are these portraits important for the subjects they portray; they also represent some of the most significant artists of the period. In addition to Charles Willson Peale and Thomas Sully, paintings by Gilbert Stuart, Robert Matthew Sully, Chester Harding, Rembrandt Peale, and John Wollaston came into the collection as well. By the eve of the Civil War, the Virginia Historical Society had more than fifty portraits, making it the largest and probably finest collection held by any institution in the antebellum South.¹⁷

The society's growing portrait collection consumed a large share of the institution's attention; however, not all acquisitions were iconographic in nature. Several important "Indian curiosities," as they were described, came in—peace badges, tomahawks, and Indian beads. Despite an assertive effort to abandon natural science, the inevitable mineral specimens continued to be acquired, including an object described in the records as "some Virginia copper of the reign of George III." Not all mineral specimens were insignificant, however. A very rare 8" x 12" lead plaque came into the collection in 1849. It was one of six that French agent Celoron de Blainville had buried in 1749 at the mouth of the Ohio River in present-day West Virginia, thereby claiming title in the name of France. All of the plates had apparently been lost, but a century later a little boy, while playing on the banks of the Kanawha River, discovered the plate and

retrieved it from the mud. It is now one of the most prized items in the collection, one that Senator Robert Byrd tried to repatriate to West Virginia several years ago.¹⁸

An examination of society records of the 1850s reveals that the emphasis on portraits and objects resulted in slow growth for the library during this period. There were a few exceptions—Mark Catesby's *Natural History* and John Randolph's copy of John Smith's *Generall Historie*—but acquisitions were limited and not particularly distinguished. By 1860, the society had about a thousand books in its collection. The same was true of manuscripts, with a few exceptions. In 1859, for example, the society acquired one of its most significant items, either before or since—the diary kept by George Washington on his tour through the South in 1790 and 1791.

Although the society lagged in library and manuscript acquisitions in the antebellum years, it did start an active publications program. Beginning in 1848, the secretary, William Maxwell, issued the quarterly *Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Advertiser*. After six volumes, he discontinued publication in 1853. But the next year it was replaced by *The Virginia Historical Reporter*, which up until the Civil War reported the proceedings of the annual meetings and public addresses.¹⁹

Without question, by 1860 the future of the Virginia Historical Society looked bright. Although it was still troubled by the lack of a permanent home, the institution was active and vibrant, important collections were coming in, its publications program had been revived, and it seemed as if it was on solid ground financially. The endowment fund that was created in the late 1840s had, by careful savings and hard work, grown to the sum of more than \$5,000 in 1861.²⁰

While the outlook for the society may have been optimistic, that for the nation was not. When the United States was torn asunder in the spring of 1861, the Virginia Historical Society suddenly found itself in a new national capital and, more importantly, in the middle of major military operations, something that would have profound consequences on the institution. Almost immediately the age-old problem of space came into play. When the Confederate government moved to Richmond, the society's rooms in the Mechanics' Institute, which it had occupied for five years, suddenly became prime space for government use. By the summer of 1861, the War Department commandeered the Mechanics' Institute. Dislodged from large rooms on the third floor, the society was given a room, little larger than a closet, in the basement. Collections were crammed into the room, and the idea of conducting programs vanished.²¹

A few months later, the trustees worked out an arrangement with

the city of Richmond to move the collections to a large room in a building a few blocks away. But on the eve of the transfer, the trustees walked over to the new building for a last inspection. One of them, Dr. Charles Barney, later recalled that he arrived at the building and mounted the stairs, where he heard the heavy military tramp of boots and the familiar call of cadence from the room above. He rushed up and demanded an explanation for using the private room of the Virginia Historical Society. The captain in charge informed him politely that he had orders to occupy the room and that the society had to make other arrangements. Barney protested vigorously, but the captain responded: "Why doctor, we are making Virginia history now—more important than any of your old books." And for the next three and a half years, sadly, the war far overshadowed books in the life of the Virginia Historical Society.²²

Dr. Barney, of course, obeyed the orders of the Confederate military and abdicated the society's claim to the newly assigned building. The problem of the collections remained, however. Their removal from the storeroom of the Mechanics' Institute was essential. Fortunately, another trustee suggested a room in the Customs House on Main Street in Capitol Square. Little did the trustees know how providential this development would turn out, because both the Mechanics' Institute and the building that Dr. Barney had been turned away from burned to the ground during the great evacuation fire in April 1865. On the other hand, the Customs House, solidly constructed of granite and iron, was one of the few buildings in the central part of town untouched by the fire.²³

With the end of the war, the society faced new hazards. In 1866, it was displaced again, this time by the Union Army of occupation. And, during the next thirty years, it moved three more times. The most valuable books, manuscripts, and portraits were frequently stored in the homes of the trustees. Not until 1893 did the society find a headquarters building that it would occupy for more than ten years—the Lee House, home of the Robert E. Lee family during the Civil War. For that matter, the society operated out of the Lee House for another sixty-six years until it moved in 1959 to its current building, often referred to as Battle Abbey.

While the Lee House eventually solved the problem of accommodations, the society continued to be plagued with something more serious—poverty. Without question, the Historical Society had a distinguished membership, but not a wealthy one. Many of its members had suffered through Virginia's economic malaise in the antebellum years and then were devastated by the war. Nevertheless, several of the members and others had been generous with their gifts. Most of these were "gifts-in-kind"—books, manuscripts, and objects—but very few were cash gifts. Most of what little

money existed was earmarked for the acquisition of collections, not support of operations. The one exception was the endowment drive of the early 1850s mentioned earlier, but that vital \$5,000 experienced a bizarre fate. In 1862, the society's executive committee invested the entire endowment in Confederate bonds! It was a patriotic act, but the consequences eventually put the organization's future in jeopardy. The society struggled financially for eighty-six years before another substantial endowment was reestablished.²⁴

Also in the postwar years, we see an interesting twist of fate. Although the founders of the Virginia Historical Society had stressed the importance of salvaging a glorious past—the revolutionary period—their successors fifty and sixty years later urged the preservation of another glorious past—the Lost Cause. Indeed, the Virginia Historical Society embraced the cult of the Lost Cause as did scores of other Southern historical institutions in the late nineteenth century. Thus began a significant effort to build what would become one of the society's great strengths, its Civil War collection—tens of thousands of letters, diaries, official documents, Confederate imprints, maps, military equipment, and eventually some 200 Confederate portraits. But that is the subject for another conference.

What then can we say in conclusion about the early collecting efforts of the South's oldest historical society? On one hand, we can be eternally grateful. If asked today to rank Virginia's collections by importance, many would come from those earliest acquisitions. We can only be thankful that the great evacuation fire of 1865 did not destroy them. But one can question if what was collected then provided a "true and authentic history" as proclaimed in the society's original charter. It represented the established white elite of the commonwealth, predominantly male at that. Its geographic scope concentrated on the Tidewater, aristocratic Northern Neck, and, of course, the city of Richmond. While the counties and people west of the Blue Ridge received short shrift in the antebellum political process in Virginia, so, too, did their history during these years. Any thoughts of collecting from a multicultural society would have been foreign to the organization's early leaders. Research subjects so important today such as slavery, women's studies, class structure, and the growing field of ecological history were buried nuggets in papers of the rich and famous that were collected in those early days. Those nuggets are mined regularly by researchers in the reading room today. But I think it unfair to judge the collecting practices of the society's early leaders by today's standards of scholarship. To them, what they collected possibly would help rescue Virginia and its people from a decline that concerned

them deeply. Although our values, our interests, and our philosophies of collecting may be different from those of the generation of the 1830s, do we see our historical societies playing a role as important today in a society that at times appears no less unsettled than that of 160 years ago?²⁵

ENDNOTES

1. Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1962), pp. 133-52; William M. E. Rachal, "The Formation of the Virginia Historical Society," in Darrett B. Rutman, ed., *The Old Dominion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), pp. 171-86; Virginius Cornick Hall, "The Virginia Historical Society: An Anniversary Narrative of its First Century and a Half," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (hereinafter cited as *VMHB*) 90 (1982).
2. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," *VMHB*, pp. 6-7.
3. David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Away, I'm Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1993), pp. 66-67, 83.
4. Fischer and Kelly, *Away*, pp. 83-84, 198.
5. Fischer and Kelly, *Away*, pp. 84-85, 195-97.
6. Fischer and Kelly, *Away*, pp. 195-97.
7. Fischer and Kelly, *Away*, pp. 84-86.
8. William M. E. Rachal, ed., "Early Records of the Virginia Historical Society," *VMHB*, 67 (1959); 7-8.
9. Rachel, "Early Records," pp. 28-29.
10. Wendell Garrett, "The Crooked Timber of Humanity," *Sotheby's Preview*, 6 (1994); 14-15.
11. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 9-11.
12. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 6.
13. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 14.
14. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 13. The care of the public archives of Virginia is beyond the scope of this paper. The following references may be helpful in research on

that subject: William J. Van Schreeven, "A Public Record Office for Virginia," *The Commonwealth* 8 (October 1941): 17; Lyon G. Tyler, "Preservation of Virginia History," *North Carolina Historical Review* 3 (October 1926): 529-38; William G. Stanard, "The Virginia Archives," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1903*, vol. 1, pp. 645-64; William C. Torrence, "The Public Archives of Virginia," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1906*, vol. 1, pp. 133-41; and Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 278-85. Posner wrote that the Virginia public records "were practically annihilated as a result of frequent fires and relocations of the capital, destruction during the Revolutionary War, and finally the burning of Richmond . . . and the pillage of the city" during the Civil War. However, in 1987, the Virginia State Library and Archives published two inventories of early local records in its possession: *A Preliminary Guide to the Pre-1904 County Records* and *A Preliminary Guide to the Pre-1904 Municipal Records*. See also H. G. Jones, *The Archival, Records Management, and Historical Publications Programs of the Virginia State Library: A Survey Report* (Raleigh, NC: For Virginia State Library Board, 1968).

15. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 21-27.
16. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 21; Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 134.
17. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 30-33.
18. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 34-35.
19. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 35-38.
20. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 49.
21. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 41.
22. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 41-42.
23. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," pp. 44-45.
24. Hall, "Virginia Historical Society," p. 49.
25. Leslie W. Dunlap, in his *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* (Madison, WI: Privately printed by Cranford Printing Co., 1944), pp. 216-217, describes one antebellum local historical society in Virginia—the Jeffersonville Historical Society at Jeffersonville (now Tazewell). Founded in 1851, its aim was "to preserve the history of the settlement and Indian wars of the south-western part of Virginia."

North Carolina

Willis P. Whichard

[Unlike the nine other papers that concentrated on historical activities in the early republic, Justice Whichard's address at the banquet on 21 May 1994 commemorated the sesquicentennial of the North Carolina Collection and therefore provided a broad sweep of the entire history of that collection. While the address was appropriately brief for such an occasion, documentation has been added to facilitate further research into the subject. Willis P. Whichard is associate justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. A native Tar Heel, he holds undergraduate and law degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and two additional degrees, including the doctorate in juridical science, from the University of Virginia. He has served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate of North Carolina and was a judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals before joining the Supreme Court. His biography of James Iredell, one of the original justices of the United States Supreme Court, is in progress. He was installed as president of the North Caroliniana Society following his address.]

When Dr. Jones extended the invitation for me to address this occasion, I wondered what a lawyer—especially one who has been taken off the starting team and put on the bench—could say to a group that includes distinguished historians, their readers, and their patrons. My initial response was to recall my own internal debate as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina between a future as a historian and a future as a lawyer. When I resolved the debate by favoring the law over Clio, I dreaded telling my History Department advisor, Jim King, who had been gently but firmly nudging me toward history graduate school. When I did, though, his response was very tempered. "Oh, that's OK," he said, "law is just history with a focus."

And indeed it is. One of the great figures in American law—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.—said much the same in his famous essay "The Path of the Law." "The rational study of law," he wrote, "is still to a large extent the study of history."

So I come to you as a historian with a focus to say, essentially, what you know so well already—namely, that history really matters. "The frontier will . . . survive in the attitudes a few of us inherited from it,"

writes Shirley Abbott. "One of those attitudes," she says, "—to me a beatitude—is the conviction that the past matters, that history weighs on us and refuses to be forgotten by us, and that the worst poverty [people] can suffer is to be bereft of their past." Perhaps, as Finley Peter Dunne said, "The past always looks better than it was: it's only pleasant because it isn't here." But whether pleasant or unpleasant, it is important. It is important because, in George Santayana's familiar words, "[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Or, as Frederic Maitland more positively expressed it: "Today we study the day before yesterday in order that yesterday may not paralyze today, and today may not paralyze tomorrow." In my own field of law, this campus's most prominent legal historian stated it this way: "What genuine legal history can offer," says John Orth,

is a candid account of the past and an invaluable perspective on the present; it can, in other words, by explaining how we got where we are, explain more comprehensively where we are. What the past cannot do is answer the problems of the present. That is the task of each generation in its turn. Enlightened and perhaps inspired by its understanding of the past, each generation creates the present.

So, the person who said, "I tell you, the past is a bucket of ashes," could hardly have been more wrong. History indeed matters.

As we celebrate the sesquicentennial of the North Carolina Collection, we know that history mattered to David Lowry Swain.¹ The collection traces its origins to January 1844 when Swain, former governor and then president of the university, led in the establishment of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina.² The society's proclaimed purposes were to inspire interest in the history of the state and "to collect, arrange and preserve at the University . . . copies of every book, pamphlet and newspaper published in this State since the first introduction of the Press among us in 1749; all books published without the State, in our own or foreign countries, on the History of Carolina, and, especially, all the records, documents and papers to be found within the State. . . ." At the same time, also under Swain's leadership, the *North Carolina University Magazine* was established, and from its initial volume it publicized state history and the aims of the organization. In its first report in June 1845, the society boasted a collection of thirty-two publications and eleven collections of manuscripts. Among the books were legislative journals, session laws, and newspapers, while the manuscripts consisted of papers of Colonial and Revolutionary leaders.³

Membership in the Historical Society was extended beyond the

university, and contributions of resources for its collections were sought. Although books and manuscripts were actively sought and for a time annual historical addresses were delivered at commencement in the name of the organization, the society remained largely Swain's creation, and he was its dominant influence. He expressed an interest in writing a history of the state, but other duties kept him from doing so. In the meanwhile the *University Magazine* appeared fairly regularly, and the society's collections grew. The books and manuscripts were kept under Swain's personal protection.⁴

During the ten years after 1858 when the Civil War intervened, the society drew no noted attention. Swain's death in 1868 briefly ended even any pretense of collecting activity.

There were then others, though, to whom history also mattered. In 1870 a commencement address by John Hill Wheeler, a former minister to Nicaragua and author of a history of the state, apparently revived interest, as it was reported that "several members of the Historical Society of North Carolina met in the University Library for the purpose of reorganizing the Society." More than a dozen leading men of the time were made honorary members, and with the assistance of Cornelia Phillips Spencer they sought to obtain possession of the resources of the society from President Swain's widow.⁵ As is carefully explained in H. G. Jones's book, *For History's Sake*, they were only partially successful.⁶ No complete inventory was ever made, some of the material was considered to have been Swain's personal property, and some apparently was sold or given away. Nevertheless, in time a significant portion was returned to the University of North Carolina and deposited in the library.

The university had closed in 1871 during the difficult time of Reconstruction, but after it reopened in 1875 another Historical Society of North Carolina was organized.⁷ One of its objectives was the collection of "books, manuscripts, papers and memorials . . . relating to the history of the State." University President Kemp P. Battle was one of the incorporators of the new society, and with his support there was a vigorous renewal of interest in North Carolina history on the campus and throughout the state. The library's holdings in the field were analyzed, and a circular was printed defining its needs. Twenty-five classes of local material were listed, among them newspapers and periodicals; statutes; geological, topographical, educational, scientific, medical, sanitary, and religious reports and statistics; and works, speeches, sermons, and literature by North Carolinians or pertaining to North Carolina. The acquisition of manuscripts, of course, was eagerly pursued.⁸

In 1901 Louis Round Wilson became university librarian, and he

began a move to organize the North Carolina materials into a special collection with its own endowment.⁹ John Sprunt Hill, a young Durham attorney to whom history also mattered, had already been encouraging the study of North Carolina history at the university by offering a prize of books for the best thesis, and he established a fellowship in history. In 1906 he made the first of a number of very significant gifts to endow the North Carolina Collection in the university library.¹⁰ By 1917 the collection's growth necessitated employment of its first full-time librarian, and Mary Lindsay Thornton was hired with funds furnished by Hill. In the ensuing seventy-seven years, there have been only two other curators of the collection, William S. Powell and H. G. Jones.¹¹ We know how much history matters to them.

In 1918 by action of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, the Stephen B. Weeks Collection, consisting of about 10,000 books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and broadsides, was purchased.¹² Weeks, a professional historian, had a broad vision of what constituted North Caroliniana, and he had collected widely. Containing many unique and rare items as well as long runs of serials and periodicals, his pattern of collecting became the model for the North Carolina Collection in the future—everything written by a North Carolinian regardless of subject or language and everything written about the state and its people regardless of author or language.

Firmly established as an important resource in support of the university's teaching program and appreciated by all who were interested in the history of the state, the North Carolina Collection soon came to be recognized as the best such state collection in the nation. In 1993 it contained a total of 226,180 catalogued items—books, pamphlets, broadsides, maps, recordings, fiche, reels of microfilm, and other forms of library resources.¹³

In 1975 the North Caroliniana Society was incorporated—again by people to whom history mattered—as a nonprofit literary, educational, and charitable organization to promote increased knowledge and appreciation of North Carolina's heritage through studies, publications, meetings, seminars, and other programs, especially through assistance to the North Carolina Collection in the acquisition, preservation, care, use, and display of, and the promotion of interest in, historical and literary materials relating to North Carolina and North Carolinians.¹⁴ Membership is by invitation and is restricted to those who have met the society's criteria of adjudged performance in and service to the state's heritage—more simply put, to those to whom history matters. The society has enhanced the collection in many significant ways—for example, through acquisition of

books and equipment, funds for special projects, and Archie K. Davis Fellowships for researchers in North Carolina history.¹⁵

As the North Carolina Collection enters its fourth half-century, it is poised for new levels of service and excellence. It must, however, have the resources to make that happen, and that is the shared responsibility of all to whom history matters. We must insure that its space and staff needs are met and that it has the resources to adapt to technological change in a timely fashion. Adequate funding for acquisition and preservation is equally essential.

Joseph Conrad wrote in his novel *Nostramos*: "For life to be large and full, it must contain the care of the past, and of the future, in every passing moment of the present. We must do our daily work for the glory of the dead, and for the good of those who come after." We will be remiss if we view this sesquicentennial occasion merely as a celebration of our past. Its more significant purpose, clearly, is to make us care for the future. Because people in the past cared for the future, I could use the collection to help sort out James Iredell's influence in moving the American colonies toward independence from Great Britain and in directing this state toward adoption of the proposed charter for a new government for the puling infant nation that followed. If we today care for the future, later researchers can use it to explain the influence of a Terry Sanford or a William Friday on education, that of a Cameron Morrison or a Kerr Scott on transportation, or that of a Dan Moore or a Jim Hunt on "total development," designed to assure the state's growth in an orderly economical, and efficient manner.

"History," Sir John Seeley said, "is past politics, and politics present history." Preservation of today's politics is thus the *sine qua non* of perpetuation of tomorrow's history. Even the religions most of us adhere to dictate this course, for the word "remember" is a favorite of the Old Testament writers, and the strongest condemnation of the Psalmist was reserved for people who had forgotten the works of the past. A modern-day prophet, Carl Sandburg, who spent his last twenty-two years residing in this state, also adopted this theme when he said, "There is a common characteristic to every great civilization that fell—its people forgot where they came from."

The story is told of two juvenile delinquents in New Orleans who were always in trouble. Neighbors' missing property could usually be found at their house. There was a Catholic church across the street, and the parents thought they would talk the priest into trying to help the boys. The priest agreed, but he wanted to do so one at a time. So the first one, whose name was Juan, came into the priest's study, sat at a chair in front

of his desk, and the priest looked at him and asked, "Juan, where is God?" There was no answer. He looked at the boy a bit more sternly and said, "Juan, I asked you, where is God?" There was still no answer. So the priest looked at the boy a third time and said, "Juan, I asked you to tell me where is God." Without answering, Juan bolted out of his chair, out of the church, across the street, and up the stairs of his parents' home to his brother's room, saying excitedly, "Jose, we're in trouble!" The older boy responded, "So what else is new? We're always in trouble." "But this time it's serious," Juan replied. "Well, trouble is our middle name; what's so serious about it this time?" Juan said, "But Jose, this time it's God that's missing, and they think we had something to do with it!"

Abraham Lincoln said in his annual message to Congress in 1862, "[W]e cannot escape history." While we cannot escape it, it can, like God in the story, be missing. Even with our best efforts, it is fragmented and incomplete. We have heard a lot about that at this conference—records not made, records not retained, records lost in moves, records destroyed in fires, records decimated in the Civil War, etc. As George Taylor expresses it, "History is only the recorded part of the remembered part of the observed part of what happened." But with our best efforts, we can avert, to some extent at least, what Shirley Abbott calls "the worst poverty [people] can suffer," which is "to be bereft of their past."

As the North Carolina Collection celebrates its sesquicentennial and enters its fourth half-century, the perpetual dialectic between the past and the future will continue and will affect our perspective and aid in forming our lives. We can hope that those who gather here in 2044 to celebrate the collection's bicentennial will be able to say it remained a vital contributor to that dialectic in its fourth half-century, as it was in its first three. We can not only hope, but work to make it so.¹⁶

ENDNOTES

1. This paper, delivered as an after-dinner address at its sesquicentennial banquet, does not seek to provide a full history of the North Carolina Collection of the first state university to open its doors, nor does it cover other historical efforts and activities in the state during the period 1791-1861. For further references to the former, see note 4 below; and for the broader story of the latter, see H. G. Jones, *For History's Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History, 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). For a biographical sketch of Swain, see Carolyn Andrews Wallace, "David Lowry Swain," in William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (projected 6 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979-), vol. 5, pp.

483-486. Swain's efforts to publish North Carolina documentary histories are covered in Jones, *For History's Sake*, pp. 182-210.

2. "The Historical Society of the University of North Carolina," in *The N. [sic] Carolina University Magazine* 1 (April 1844): 82-84. Bishop Levi S. Ives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina delivered the introductory address for the society on 5 June 1844. *Ibid.* 1 (July 1844): 201-216. Two earlier historical societies, in 1833 and 1841, were stillborn. For an account of the various nineteenth-century societies and their collecting activities, see Jones, *For History's Sake*, pp. 239-258.

3. *First Report of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1845* (Hillsborough: Printed by Dennis Heartt, 1845).

4. Among accounts of the founding and history of the North Carolina Collection are the following: Mary Lindsay Thornton, "Collection of North Caroliniana," in Charles Everett Rush, ed., *Library Resources of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), pp. 27-38; D. A. Yanchisin, "For Carolina's Sake—A Case History in Special Librarianship," in *Journal of Library History* (January 1971): 41-71; H. G. Jones, "Preserving North Carolina's Literary Heritage," in *Popular Government* 55 (Winter 1990): 20-28; Jack Betts, "H. G. Jones's Attic," in *Charlotte Observer* (1 May 1993): 16A; Billy Arthur, "The North Carolina Collection," in *The State* 60 (January 1993): 10-13; Phuong Ly, "Grandmother's Attic: The North Carolina Collection Celebrates 150 Years of Preserving North Caroliniana," in *Carolina Alumni Magazine* 83 (Winter 1994): 58-65; and a twelve-page leaflet titled *The North Carolina Collection: The Reading Room, The Gallery, Photographic Services* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Collection, 1989). The mammoth newspaper clipping file in the North Carolina Collection, much of which is now in bound form, is pregnant with news under the heading "University-Library-North Carolina Collection." Periodic reports of acquisitions in the early years are found in the *North Carolina University Magazine*. Annual reports of the curator since 1975 have been published; surviving unpublished reports for prior years are bound and cataloged in the collection. Twentieth-century references to major developments may be found in the annual reports of the university librarian. Although some of the collection's original records are in the University Archives, a selection of the most important letters, including some from John Sprunt Hill and Bruce Cotten, will be found in Mary Lindsay Thornton's scrapbook titled "Memorabilia" (call number VC027.7/N87un2) in the North Carolina Collection.

5. Kemp Plummer Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina* (2 vols.; Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1907-1912), vol. 2, pp. 36-37.

6. The dispersal of the manuscripts and the return of some of them are followed in Jones, *For History's Sake*, pp. 258-269.

7. Chapter 127, "An Act to Incorporate the Historical Society of North Carolina," in *Private Laws of the State of North Carolina . . . 1874-'75* (Raleigh: Josiah Turner, 1875), pp. 648-649; Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, vol. 2, pp. 105-108. Quite unusual for its time, the legislative act creating the society designated as one of its charter members Cornelia Phillips Spencer, who no doubt with tongue in cheek expressed surprise

over "the greatness I have achieved," adding, "I am indeed very much flattered and very much pleased—more pleased than flattered—because I look upon the introduction of a woman's name among your honorable body as a significant token, and pledge *for the future*, as an intimation to my sex that *that* door is open to them henceforth, and however humble and insignificant their contributions to the history of their native State have heretofore been, they are now invited and stimulated to enter upon the study, and to do all in their power to aid in illustrating, extending and preserving our annals. A right, noble, and not unwomanly work! I hope to see many names, (more worthy than mine), of the daughters of North Carolina, added to that goodly list of her sons." "The Historical Society," in *Our Living and Our Dead* 3 (July 1875): 61-65.

8. "The North Carolina Historical Society: An Appeal to Its Friends," in *North Carolina Educational Journal* 1 (15 January 1881): 6. Following the death of William A. Graham only a year after his election to the presidency of the organization, Judge John Kerr served until 1879, when Kemp P. Battle, president of the university, began a long tenure as leader of the society. Among other articles on the postwar organization are "The Historical Society," in *North Carolina University Magazine* 2 [new series] (October 1878): 85-86; "The North Carolina Historical Society," in *Ibid.* 7 [new series] (December 1887): 81-83; and a circular letter, dated 20 February 1888, from Kemp P. Battle, A. W. Mangum, George T. Winston, Claudius Dockery, and Stephen B. Weeks titled *The North Carolina Historical Society* (copy in the North Carolina Collection).

9. The standard biography of Wilson is Maurice F. Tauber, *Louis Round Wilson: Librarian and Administrator* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). Wilson's extensive writings, some of them about the North Carolina Collection, resulted in Linda Angle Miller and H. G. Jones, eds., *Louis Round Wilson Bibliography: A Chronological List of Works and Editorial Activities Presented on His Centennial Celebration, December 2, 1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Library, 1976). A description of Wilson's papers in the Southern Historical Collection is included. In 1909 President Francis P. Venable was joined by Wilson and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, a history professor, in a circular letter (copy in the North Carolina Collection) announcing that the new Carnegie Library had provided "a fire-proof vault in the Library stack-room with specially designed steel cases for the more valuable manuscripts, pamphlets, and volumes, and set apart one large upstairs room for the general collection of North Caroliniana." Appealing for additional gifts, the circular noted, "In every locality in the State, there are files of newspapers and collections of letters, manuscripts, pamphlets, and books which we could use to great advantage. . . ."

10. For some of Hill's many contributions, see James Vickers, "The Hill Family Legacy," in *Carolina Alumni Review* 75 (Spring 1987): 24-29; and Roger N. Kirkman, "John Sprunt Hill," in Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 3, p. 137. Hill's later gifts included cash (for example, he paid for the reproduction Chippendale furnishings when the North Carolina Collection occupied Wilson Library's new main floor east wing in the early 1950s) and real estate (including the Carolina Inn and four "Hill" buildings at 138, 140, 142, and 144 East Franklin Street, the profits from which were to be devoted to the North Carolina Collection).

11. Mary Lindsay Thornton (1891-1973) retired as librarian in 1958. Powell, who had been on the staff for several years, succeeded her and served from 1958 to 1973, when he chose to devote full time to teaching and writing. Jane C. Bahnsen was acting curator until March 1974, when Jones transferred from the directorship of the State Department of Archives and History in Raleigh to the curatorship of the collection. Jones retired as curator at the end of 1993 and was appointed part-time Thomas Whitmell Davis research historian in the collection. The appointment of the new curator, Robert G. Anthony, Jr., formerly collection development librarian on the staff, was announced at the sesquicentennial banquet just after Justice Whichard completed his address.

12. Louis Round Wilson, "The Acquisition of the Stephen B. Weeks Collection of Caroliniana," in *North Carolina Historical Review* 42 (Autumn 1965): 424-429. See also H. G. Jones, "Stephen Beauguard Weeks: North Carolina's First 'Professional' Historian," in the same issue, pp. 410-423. Weeks was the foremost collector of North Caroliniana; unlike Bruce Cotten who was discriminating in his collecting, Weeks sought a copy of everything relating to the state. In addition, he published extensively. See William S. Powell, comp., *Stephen Beauguard Weeks, 1865-1918: A Preliminary Bibliography* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Collection, 1965). Weeks's daughter-in-law in the 1980s bequeathed the Mangum and Josephine Weeks Memorial Collection of art and rare books.

13. After joining the Department of History in 1906, Professor J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, a collector par excellence, spent much of his time scouting for manuscripts, and when he felt that he had pretty well scoured North Carolina, he turned his attention to other Southern states. As a result, by 1930 the library owned a rich collection of unpublished materials that deserved to be handled in accordance with modern archival principles and procedures, which were quite different from traditional library cataloging techniques. Consequently, most manuscripts were transferred from the North Carolina Collection to a new department, the Southern Historical Collection, with Hamilton as curator. For Hamilton's own story of the establishment of the new department, see his article, "The Southern Historical Collection," in Rush, *Library Resources of the University of North Carolina*, pp. 39-46. The Southern Historical Collection is now the premier manuscript repository in its field. Number 50 of *The Bookmark*, published by the library, was devoted to that collection on its fiftieth anniversary. See especially J. Carlyle Sitterson, "The Southern Historical Collection, 1930-1980: The Pursuit of History," pp. 46-59. See also Carolyn Andrews Wallace, "The Southern Historical Collection," in *The American Archivist* 28 (1965): 427-436. Although the North Carolina Collection still administers the noted Thomas Wolfe Manuscript Collection and a few other private papers received under special conditions, it now refers prospective donors of manuscripts to the Southern Historical Collection.

14. Since 1975 the society has published with the collection *Annual Reports of the North Caroliniana Society, Inc. and the North Carolina Collection*. Beginning in 1978 it has published 23 signed, limited-edition *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* ranging from 18 to 266 pages each. It has also issued five *North Caroliniana Society Keepsakes* (broadsides). Membership currently is limited to 150 individuals meeting its strict criteria of "adjudged performance" in service to their state's cultural heritage. The annual North Caroliniana Society Award for exceptional lifetime contributions to the history, literature, and culture of the state was inaugurated in 1978.

15. Archie K. Davis Fellowships provide, on a competitive basis, modest stipends to assist scholars in gaining access to original source materials elucidating North Carolina's rich history and culture. The grants are funded from income from a gift of \$250,000 in 1987 from the Research Triangle Foundation of North Carolina in honor of Archibald Kimbrough Davis, the foundation's longtime board chairman and the North Caroliniana Society's president.

16. A tracing of the recent growth of the collection and expansion of its space and responsibilities within the university library system is beyond the scope of this paper, which was delivered as an after-dinner address, and the reader is referred to publications cited in note 4 above. It may be useful, however, to record here that the collection assumed responsibility for the library's Photographic Services Section in 1980, established the North Carolina Collection Gallery in 1989, and vastly increased its public service facilities following the renovation of Louis Round Wilson Library in the 1980s. The collection selects, prepares orders for, catalogs, and provides maintenance and reference for all of its holdings. It operates on a combination of endowment funds and state funds. Currently, for example, book purchases and salaries of four permanent and some part-time positions come from nonappropriated funds, while state appropriated funds furnish the remainder of the staff, most supplies and equipment, physical facilities, and other overhead. The North Carolina Collection Gallery is financed mainly from endowment income, and the Photographic Services Section depends chiefly upon revenue from services. Support from friends has always been characteristic. In addition to thousands of smaller gifts, the collection has received in the past half century the Thomas Wolfe Collection of manuscripts, books, and other materials; the Bruce Cotten Collection of rare North Caroliniana; and the Mangum and Josephine Weeks Memorial Collection of art and rare books, much of it associated with ornithology. Major donors of funds, in addition to John Sprunt Hill, have included the Roanoke Colony Memorial Association (whose gift inaugurated the incomparable Sir Walter Raleigh Collection), Bruce Cotten (the income from whose endowment permits additions to the collection bearing his name), and Thomas Whitmell Davis (the income from whose fund may be used for purposes designated by the curator). Other special gifts and endowment funds—such as those bearing the names James Sloan Curry, T. Harry Gatton, H. G. Jones, Theodore C. and Betty Lou Kerner, Morton I. Teicher, and Central Carolina Bank—are listed in the curator's annual report.

A "Report of the North Caroliniana Society Ad Hoc Committee to Study the North Carolina Collection," published in *Annual Reports of the North Caroliniana Society, Inc. and the North Carolina Collection, 1993-1994*, pp. 36-45, provides an analysis of the current status of the collection and recommendations for its future.

Other Atlantic States: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina

Richard J. Cox

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Introduction

We now possess a considerable quantity of studies on the history and purpose of recordkeeping, literacy, and collective memory. These studies reveal, probably more so than we have ever considered before, some of the dominant trends and issues that confronted Americans in the early republic with the creation and maintenance of their public records and personal papers. Anthropologist Jack Goody, in his study of the influence of writing on society and its institutions, has described the controlling influence of writing and records. Goody notes that "writing remains a significant factor since it constitutes an important dimension of power at any level." He goes on to note that the "composition of the agenda and the written report structures the decisions a committee makes; those who read and study the papers are in a position to exercise power. The taker of minutes is not simply a service role but one that can influence the decisions made."¹ In the same manner, we can see how the record in the early republic was often the source of and the support for politicians and others in or seeking power, as well as for the individual entrepreneur, the

slaveholder, the cleric, and others. In fact, the very fabric of any society is tied to its uses of information and its records. As one commentator on the notion of an information society or age has suggested, "Civilization is information. Most of the factors that characterize a civilization—its ethics and laws, its technology, its philosophy and religion, its literature and art—are forms of information."² Extending this argument, we can see how much of the story of the early republic concerns its use of information and the preservation and use of its records; in effect, any age is an information age to some extent. Still, it is a story that is largely untold and largely neglected by both archivists and historians.

The following essay is divided into two major segments. The first part is an analysis of the development of archives and historical manuscripts repositories and other efforts to preserve documentary records in six Atlantic states in the early republic—Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina. As can be discerned, the interest in and activity on behalf of the preservation and use of archives in these states followed remarkably similar patterns. While there was some activity by individual autograph collectors to preserve important documentary sources and by leading families and citizens to manage their own archives, most of the work in this realm was devoted to the establishment of private historical societies, the care of older public records, and documentary editing and publication. Interest in preservation of the documentary heritage was evident, while vacillating throughout the seventy years of this era, although technique and approach were primitive.

The second part of this essay is a critique of the sources on and studies of the archival development of these states. Having devoted a significant part of my own research and publication to the topic of American archival history, it was a surprise still to see how little attention this topic has been accorded by both archivists and historians in recent years. Most of the sources drawn on for this essay are twenty or more years old. Why is this topic so neglected? What needs to be done? How should it be carried out? Who should do the research? Examining the history of efforts to preserve documentary sources in these Atlantic states in the early republic causes us to ask as many questions as we can answer or speculate about. So, I must state that this essay is a preliminary effort at best because it is dependent on a mixed array of secondary studies that reveal many gaps.

Archival Development in Six Atlantic States

The First Great Age of the Collectors. It was during the years of the

early republic that America's first great manuscript and autograph collectors emerged as representatives of the burgeoning interest in our past. Many of these individuals were also key players in the movement to establish the pioneering historical manuscript and archival repositories. Many were also historians and antiquarians who had to acquire personally their sources in order to compose their studies. Collecting was their preeminent interest, whether for personal curiosity or for scholarly or institutional purposes. David Van Tassel has dubbed this era a period characterized by "documania," one of those phrases brilliant in its capacity to capture precisely the prevailing attitudes of the time. In his analysis he includes both the activity of institutions like historical societies and that of autograph collectors, genealogists, and the just plain curious or acquisitive.³ This era is not unlike our own, in that we have a wide array of users of archives, even if we often overemphasize the role of the scholarly or academic historian at the expense of our other constituencies. Callcott's study of the Romantic historians of this period captured the same essence with his emphasis on "antiquarianism," noting that "Romanticisms included love of the specific as well as the grand, of minutiae as well as rhetoric." It is why historians cribbed extensively from the original sources and why historical societies and individual collectors acquired important documents as well as bizarre and unusual items.⁴ Moreover, as Lyman Butterfield has characterized it, autograph collecting became popular because of the fact that it was relatively easy to acquire such treasures, and the easiness of the hunt was further spurred by the new burst of patriotism evident in the period.⁵ While great collectors were few, they were a group that corresponded and cooperated with each other and, as well, inspired lesser collectors.⁶

Individual collecting, serious pastime and diversion, was evident in these Atlantic states during the early republic. In Georgia, Israel K. Tefft began collecting autographs, somewhat haphazardly in the early years, by 1815 or 1816, and when in 1867 after his death his collection was sold at auction, it included between 25,000 and 30,000 items. Tefft's collection included complete sets of autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Tefft was also one of the leaders in 1839 in the founding of the Georgia Historical Society.⁷ Robert Gilmore, Jr., of Baltimore also amassed a large collection of early American manuscripts, and he was a leader in the founding of the Maryland Historical Society. Gilmore considered himself to be the first prominent American autograph collector, having assembled a complete set of the autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence by 1845 and, in addition, donating the first major manuscript collection to the Maryland Historical Society in the same year.⁸ Gilmore twice published detailed

inventories of his collection, reflecting that it doubled between 1831 and 1841 to more than two thousand different items.⁹ Tefft and Gilmor were prominent enough to be identified in an 1845 essay on leaders in autograph collecting published in *Graham's Magazine*.¹⁰ Others were less prominent, but they pursued their avocation with the same passion and endurance. Jacob Engelbrecht of Frederick, Maryland, consistently wrote to national figures and between 1824 and 1827 succeeded in acquiring the autographs of a goodly number of such individuals, such as Jefferson, Madison, and John Adams.¹¹

The connection between individual collectors and archival and historical manuscript repositories is well portrayed by the career of the Reverend Ethan Allen, an Episcopalian minister, historian, and pioneer archivist, primarily active in Maryland. Allen served in Maryland from 1848 until the mid-1870s, including a significant period as the Diocese's official historiographer. Writing parish histories, preparing other histories of the church and the state, and fulfilling other administrative duties, Allen found himself traveling throughout Maryland examining the records of the church and, at times, gathering and arranging these records. Allen also was active in the work of the Maryland Historical Society and lobbied on behalf of the preservation of Maryland's colonial and Revolutionary War records. In evaluating Allen's career, it is easy to see that his primary skills were in collecting the historical records rather than in writing histories, and it is good that these Atlantic states had many individuals like Allen laboring to preserve their early records.¹² Allen's career is typical of the English antiquarian tradition that preceded by a century and a half the American version, but which reflected the same stress on collecting old documents, building collections, and acquiring both public records as well as private manuscripts.¹³

No individual collector had a greater impact in these years than Jared Sparks, who traveled through these states in 1826 examining and copying many public records and private manuscripts to be used in his own documentary editions, biographies, and histories. In addition to his own collecting work, Sparks provided a commentary on the work of other collectors. In Georgia, Sparks visited with Joseph Bevan, then writing a history of the state. He noted that Bevan had "collected a great many private papers relating to the Revolution. Letters of a public character relating to the Revolution. Letters of a public character were preserved by individuals at the time of the first Revolutionary movements, chiefly because there was no public depository for them. Such was the case in all the colonies, and these papers are now for the most part in possession of the descendants of the conspicuous actors in the Revolutionary scenes."¹⁴

Sparks, in his travels, stayed close to the capitals and other major urban areas, stressing the potential of the state government offices; had he spent more time searching for individual and family papers we might today have a better sense of the active collecting taking place in the Atlantic states in the early republic.

Viewing the individual collectors provides the sense that the documentary records of these Atlantic states remained scattered throughout the localities, often in the hands of descendants or stashed in out-of-the-way closets and desks. The sense of documania that chroniclers of this period have captured is in part a reflection of the great discoveries that remained to be made and of the closeness to the past that access to the historical records could provide, the symbolic aspect that underlies all remnants of past activity—archival or artifactual.¹⁵ While the collecting was often haphazard and the criteria often ill-defined, it was such individual acquisitiveness that characterized this formative period of archival development in these Atlantic states. And the individual collecting has a psychological side as well, deep-rooted in an individual's own self and personality that remains to be deciphered by historians of the formation of historical records and archival repositories.¹⁶

The Institutionalization of Collecting: The Establishment of State and Local Historical Societies. Between 1819 and 1864 the Atlantic states covered by this essay established historical societies of one sort or another, although we must admit that the emphasis was mostly on acquisition and less on control (or management) or access.¹⁷ The main cluster of activity came in the antebellum years, with historical societies founded in Georgia (1839), Maryland (1844), and New Jersey (1845). South Carolina (1855), Florida (1856), and Delaware (1864) established societies at the very tail end of the period, and none of these were particularly vital before the outbreak of the Civil War.¹⁸ These institutions were part of the rapid movement of historical society founding that saw such organizations established in every state and many towns and counties in the early nation.

What can be surmised about the nature, objectives, and activities of the historical societies? Although all were private, clubby affairs, all also received various levels of state government support (although minor in comparison to today's standards). There was a practical reason for this, suggested by another common function of these institutions: they served as surrogate state government archives. In 1839, the Georgia legislature voted to make the state historical society the depository for the transcripts of English records copied by Charles Wallace Howard, a project supported by state funds.¹⁹ In New Jersey, the historical societies often were

aggressive in arguing for the care of public records with historical value. In 1853 the New Jersey Historical Society received permission to publish the early records of the Common Council of the City of Newark (a publication that appeared in 1864), and in 1860 the Board of Supervisors of Ulster County, at the request of the Ulster Historical Society, provided funds for improving the care of their county records.²⁰ In 1860 the manuscript collections of the South Carolina Historical Society were moved to the Robert Mills fireproof building in Charleston where other important state records were being maintained.²¹ It was not just that the historical society leadership thought that the state governments were providing inadequate care for their archival records; it was as much that the societies were interested in all older records chronicling the establishment and development of the colonies and then states (although none in these early years would show much interest in non-white populations and their records).

The development of the Maryland Historical Society is typical of these early organizations.²² The charter stated that its purpose was "collecting, preserving and diffusing information relating to the civil, natural and literary history of this State, and to American history and biography generally."²³ At the first meeting of the society on 27 January 1844, one of its founding principles was defined as "collecting the scattered materials of the early history of the state of Maryland."²⁴ Its collections expanded rapidly. By 1845 a cataloging system was in place, and the following year a librarian was hired to care for all of its collections. The real impetus to its acquisitions came when in 1847 the state resolved to transfer to the society all of the original records relating to Maryland before the Revolutionary War that were in duplicate or in an "apparent or manifest decay."²⁵ By 1854, when it published its first catalog, the society owned 409 groups of historical documents, primarily concerning the colonial and revolutionary eras.²⁶

Two of the states under consideration here did not establish historical societies until the end of or immediately following the period under study. The Historical Society of Florida was organized in 1856, but it was never very active and was dead by the start of the Civil War, not to be revived until the early twentieth century.²⁷ Ernst Posner speculated that the failure to establish an effective state archives was due to the loss of its early records to Spain and England, and this might also explain the floundering of a statewide historical society.²⁸ Delaware did not establish a historical society until 1864 (although attempts had been made as early as 1828), the very end of the period under consideration in this essay. The chronicler of that institution's history attributes this late development to

the lack of an urban center and the lack of a strong cultural and intellectual center.²⁹ But the other states had strong and older urban areas with cultural centers, prominent individuals and families, major businesses, and the wealth available to those with antiquarian bents and historical curiosities.

What we see here is the initial development of historical societies, primarily as repositories for the gathering of historical records and mainly as an extension of the individual antiquarian collectors' peculiarities, attitudes, and habits. All had some avowed purpose of assembling the historical records of their states. Since none of these institutions had been in existence very long, no more than a few decades by the start of the Civil War, it is not possible to see any general models or patterns of development. Page Smith has remarked that if there is any "law" in history, it is that "all human institutions tend to formalism," that is, they shift from their original purposes to "simply maintaining themselves."³⁰ If this indeed occurred with historical societies, it is long after the years of the early republic. For this period and until well into the twentieth century, such historical societies were the primary means of preserving the archival and historical records. They were acquiring the documentary remnants of the past, and their leaders were learning as they went. Most of their efforts were new, and it is difficult to fault them for any of their activities, even when the collecting schemes seemed too broadly conceived or haphazardly executed. There have been speculations about the broader motives for the creation of these organizations that explain their vacuum-cleaner approach to acquiring historical documents and other artifacts, ranging from views suggesting that it was the avowed "uselessness" of the objects the societies collected that made them function to explanations that the societies were efforts to deal with rapid changes brought by the society of the time.³¹ Whatever might have been the cause, we need more study of these particular states to be able to discern their *motives*; what we now possess are descriptions of their *activities*.

The Preservation and Management of Public Records. Public records management represents, perhaps, the greatest quantity of activity in trying to preserve the documentary heritage of these Atlantic states. It appears that, in some states at least, the efforts to care for public records prior to the Civil War were better than those of the first generation or two after this climactic event. Easterby, in examining the records of South Carolina, characterized public records management before the Civil War in the following manner:

The measures that were adopted in those early years for the protection of the archives were timely; they were usually wise; and those that were

applied in times of crisis may even be described as heroic. Much copying and indexing was done; and, by means of subsidies granted to individual historians and the South Carolina Historical Society, something was accomplished toward procuring transcripts of records in England and toward publishing the more significant documents.³²

Similar statements could be made for the other states. Still, we know that in the period *before* the Civil War havoc was still wracked on the public records through negligence, fires and other natural disasters, and war.³³ Yet, it is easy to detect evolving higher levels of concern for the protection of records, keeping in mind that the level of office technology was still fairly simple and relatively unchanged for at least a couple of hundred years,³⁴ nor were the expectations of Americans particularly great when it came to their sense of how records were to be maintained or to be used.³⁵ There were some efforts, such as Robert Mills's design and construction of the fireproof building in Charleston, South Carolina, to house the public records in safer environments.³⁶ The New Jersey legislature in 1795 passed an act providing for the construction of a "convenient house" for the secretary of state and clerk of the Supreme Court to be used, in part, for the preservation of public records.³⁷ After the 1833 fire in the state house, the legislature of Georgia passed a resolution for the better care of the records of "ancient date" and began efforts to fireproof the state capitol building.³⁸ But more common were continuing efforts to collect and arrange older records, purchase better storage materials, and copy and prepare indexes to the records. In South Carolina, the state legislature appropriated funds in 1801, 1818, 1820, and 1825 for the acquisition of new filing cases,³⁹ and it was these kinds of piecemeal efforts that pre-occupied government officials rather than more comprehensive endeavors such as the design and construction of repositories. If historical societies were manifestations of the general tendency to collect interesting but less than useful historical bric-a-brac, the activities by the state governments toward their own records also demonstrate a similar sense that the older records should be protected but that the task was not given priority. The sense of relevance of the older records to current government work was not there, or, at least, was not very strong.

The indexing of public records seemed to be a major preoccupation with those concerned with the care of public records. South Carolina used funds for indexing selected records in 1800 and 1821.⁴⁰ In fact, South Carolina's efforts in this area suggest that indexing was a major test of how well public records were being managed. A report in 1839 on the records of the House of Representatives commented favorably on their condition, noting that they were "divided and classified with great regularity and

method; with indexes and cross indexes."⁴¹

The physical arrangement of the public records also seemed to be a matter of continuing, if usually sporadic, concern. South Carolina set aside funds for arranging public records in 1819, 1835, and 1849.⁴² South Carolina had struggled with the change in state capitol sites and worked hard for many years to ensure that the appropriate records were at the seat of government. Part of the physical arrangement was the consolidation of the records where they would be accessible to the state officials.⁴³ In 1824 Georgia passed a similar act.⁴⁴ During the War of 1812, Maryland constantly shifted its records of its central government from place to place to protect them from the British. On 8 December 1813, Maryland Governor Levin Winder sought advice from both the Senate and House regarding how to care for the records. He noted that the records would have to be moved when the British threatened, but he also noted that "there is a considerable danger of their [the records] being lost or destroyed by frequent removals: The legislature will see the necessity of making some further provision with respect to them."⁴⁵ The territorial legislature of Florida was worried enough about the welfare of the old Spanish colonial records that it established an office for a public records custodian.⁴⁶ Again, in 1845, a Florida act required the secretary of state "to cause all books and maps belonging to the state to be collected together."⁴⁷ The public records of other states also suffered from a lack of fixed location. Jared Sparks in 1826 related that Delaware's secretary of state was devoid of archives because "this office has had no fixed place till recently. The secretary has lived in different parts of the State, and the office has been at his own residence. All the papers have thus been scattered and lost."⁴⁸ Sparks, writing of his travels of the same year in Columbia, South Carolina, noted how the "keeper of the Records & papers in the Executive Department" was hesitant to allow him to examine the records either out of fear of his doing "mischief by gaining too much knowledge" or because of worry about the "safe keeping and proper treatment of the papers."⁴⁹ Whatever the practical results of such protection or the real motives (political or proprietary?), the attitudes revealed some level of concern about the records.

Inspection and subsequent recopying of damaged or worn records was another activity in the management of public records. In fact, inspection of public records was the continuation of a tradition from the colonial years and common to English recordkeeping practices that most influenced American public records management.⁵⁰ South Carolina also used public funds for the copying of records in 1845, 1846, and 1850.⁵¹ This same state issued a report on the inspection of the records in 1817,

noting that "some important records have already perished, or are rapidly going to destruction," and urging copying, binding, and restorage in new cases as the solution.⁵² Georgia was particularly busy in this regard. This state was constantly passing laws and issuing orders for its public officials to take better care of the records. In 1792, 1799, and 1810 the governor ordered an inquiry into the condition of public records. The condition was so grievous that the Senate urged the governor to withhold the salary of any official who had not properly maintained his records. In mid-century, in 1845, an amendment to the state constitution called for the Supreme Court of Georgia to have a clerk to maintain its records.⁵³ In Maryland in 1822 an order to the Senate clerk to "arrange" its records and to provide easy access to them led to a report that the records were in the "greatest disorder"; a result was the passage of "An act to compel all public record officers in this state to keep up their records."⁵⁴

Why did state government archives develop after the turn of the century and not before? This is another of those speculative questions not fully grappled with by the historians of the archival profession. It might be that the private historical societies were the acceptable venue since historical records were still viewed more often as antiquarian curiosities, valuable, but as symbolic remembrances of the past rather than as utilitarian sources for public administration or the protection of legal rights. We know that the origins of the Southern state archives at the beginning of the twentieth century were tied to new professional ideals, scientific history, progressivism and reform, and a reemergence of sectional pride.⁵⁵ During the early republic these elements were not in place; we had, instead, early nationalism, romanticism, antiquarianism, and other such prevailing philosophies.

Documentary Editing and Publication. Nearly every state in the sixty years from 1791 to 1861 supported the work of documentary editing and publishing. This effort to preserve through print can be understood in several different ways. First, it was an extension of earlier colonial-era efforts to print colonial laws and legislative proceedings as an official and accessible record of government. Second, printing older records can be seen as a straightforward use of a convenient and timely technology. The more copies, the greater the chance of survival. Third, and finally, the use of printing can be viewed as part of a continuing, long shift from the scribal to the print age, an aspect that archivists and archival historians have not fully mined as of yet. While autograph collecting may be seen as a hanging-on to the older scribal age when documents were prized as much for their contents as for their feel and sense of the past, the increased use

of the press to publish documentary editions can also be viewed as part of the shift to a more utilitarian perspective on the sources of the past.⁵⁶

Documentary publication efforts were widespread throughout these Atlantic states. In South Carolina, for example, R. W. Gibbes prepared and published three volumes of his *Documentary History of the American Revolution* from 1853 through 1857.⁵⁷ Some of this activity was made possible by the largesse of the state governments. When the legislature incorporated the South Carolina Historical Society in 1856, it appropriated \$500 for three successive years for support of its initial publications.⁵⁸ Other states, such as Maryland, did not publish much in the way of documentary editions but instead supported the publication of histories that often called for the publication of source materials or, just as frequently, featured extensive quotations from the original sources. John Leeds Bozman's 1811 history of the state urged the state government to hire "some judicious compiler . . . to arrange and publish such documents remaining of our provincial or state records."⁵⁹

Some of these states also supported the copying of pertinent records in English records offices and archives. In late 1837 Georgia provided financial support for Charles Wallace Howard to undertake such work. Howard compiled twenty-two volumes, each with two hundred pages, in his two-year effort.⁶⁰ In 1849 South Carolina appropriated funds for the recopying of many of its earlier records and to send an agent to London, Paris, and Madrid to secure copies of pertinent records.⁶¹ The New Jersey Historical Society appealed to the state legislature in 1843, 1845, and 1850 for funds to support the copying of New Jersey-related documents in English archives. These latter efforts failed, but the historical society secured private funds with which to hire Henry Stevens; the state legislature, finally in 1852, approved a \$500 appropriation for the purchase of copies if an index to the Stevens's copies was published (it was in 1858).⁶² In Maryland the work of copying European documents was coupled with an inspection of the early public records in Annapolis. This led to a major effort to care for the public archives, which, though interrupted by the Civil War, was resumed in 1882 with the start of the massive documentary series, the *Archives of Maryland*—a joint venture between the Maryland Historical Society and the state government.⁶³

Part of the incentive for the publishing of primary sources was, of course, to establish stronger state and national identities, basically the same reason why so many of the early state histories were being written and published in the early republic.⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson has suggested that the "convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined

community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation."⁶⁵ In a similar fashion, the convergence of printing technologies, new political agendas, and the effort to create a viable past through the publication of histories and documentary editions led to support of the new states and new nation. In a fashion, the documentary editions were as important as the repositories, a view by historical editors that has, unfortunately, remained prevalent to this day. While in the early republic *any* effort to preserve the documentary heritage—including transcription, editing, and publishing—can be seen as positive, the late twentieth century should have brought a new maturity to such efforts. It has not done so, and the lack of understanding about the relationship of documentary publication to other means to preserve and disseminate historical records may be the result of our lack of understanding of the successes and failures of earlier such ventures.⁶⁶

Personal, Family, and Business Record-Keeping. While little has been studied about the recordkeeping habits of individuals, their families, and their business concerns in the early republic, we can surmise something about such practices. For one thing, as was hinted at above, the early republic predates the time when information management became innovative. As James Beniger has demonstrated, for example, merchants and their firms controlled their businesses and their records in such traditional methods as family partnerships, societal codes, and community relations *until* information technologies, transportation, and communication were radically transformed, beyond the capability of individuals and small firms to manage them, to support the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁷ Before the Civil War, copying and bookkeeping were the primary duties of clerks in small offices with simple chains of command and personal supervision. After the Civil War, the size of business firms increased as did their activity, and they also began to employ individuals for more specialized work, including the use of new office machinery such as typewriters.⁶⁸

Personal recordkeeping has been another issue altogether. Hamer, in his review of the preservation of the records of Southern history, stated that such private preservation has been "more the result of chance and less the result of foresight than the public ones. We have little of the tradition of preserving family archives. Personal papers have been destroyed deliberately, often by descendants who had no conception of their value. Many have been preserved for a time and then destroyed by fire. . . . Too often when they have been preserved, their present possessors are disinclined, for a multitude of reasons, to place them in institutions where they will be kept safely and made available for the use of scholars."⁶⁹

Still, we can discover exceptions. Jared Sparks, with uneven success, sought out the descendants of Revolutionary War leaders expecting to find the papers of their famous forebears. Henry Laurens of South Carolina we know kept in bound letterbooks copies of most of the letters he wrote. In 1773 he even offered the following advice to his son:

I wish you would adopt the Rule of Setting down in each Letter the date of your last, & what Letters you have received—this is a formality extremely necessary in every regular correspondence—I hope the time will come when you will have to write upon Subjects of the first Importance, habituate your Self betimes to useful Methods.⁷⁰

Part of his attitude toward his own papers may have derived from his knowledge that his own father had destroyed the Laurens family papers because he had "looked upon them as incapable of producing any real benefit," Laurens mused in 1773, "— & had no inclination to gratify his Vanity by a retrospect of any little Grandeur which might have existed, before he was born, among his Fore fathers."⁷¹ I am confident we would find other such sentiments in the personal papers of leading individuals and families.⁷²

We also know that many personal papers suffered damage from wars, natural disasters, and neglect in the decades of the early republic. While Laurens was absent from his home in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, his personal papers were dealt "plunder and ravage . . . and among other Instances of Barbarism the mean and unprofitable act of scattering my Papers before the Wind, burning them, tearing, and destroying my Books."⁷³ Similar fate certainly afflicted other such papers on family estates. But it is more than likely that it was the general neglect or lack of knowledge about how to care for personal papers that contributed to the demise of most such records. Still, we can discover the papers of many individuals and families in the historical societies and other repositories because of the efforts of institutions to acquire them. In fact, the strengths of most historical societies in these Atlantic states rest on the papers of prominent families and individuals. At the Maryland Historical Society, for example, early collecting was probably divided between endeavors to gather the records of the colonial and early state governments and the papers of political, military, and other leaders.

Summary: Archival Development in Six Atlantic States. There are noticeable patterns and similarities in the effort to preserve the archival records and historical manuscripts in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida between 1791 and 1861. Publication

of source materials and the establishment of historical societies were the primary and most effective means by which such preservation took place. Historians and autograph hunters assembled collections, some of which later were deposited in the historical societies, although it is difficult to determine whether the energies of these people did more harm than good through the disruption of provenance and the highly selective acquiring typical of the period. David Ridgely, Maryland's first state librarian, complained in 1841, for example, that autograph collectors were stealing and mutilating the early government records for signatures of famous individuals.⁷⁴ Government efforts, while sporadic if intense at times, seemed to vacillate between concern for the utility of the public records to the officials and an interest in preserving the older records. It is possible that the interest in the older records was as much due to curiosity as to any real sense of concern for their ongoing maintenance. Shuffling off public archives to private historical societies seemed as practical a solution as any other. While prominent families often maintained their papers in fairly systematic fashion, it is also unclear whether there was sustained activity in the early republic for their preservation. Certainly the historical societies acquired significant batches of records, but many of the early records and papers were still being acquired by repositories well into the twentieth century. We do not know if there was any systematic success in personal recordkeeping or if what was acquired has been due largely to chance; while clearly we now possess a significant quantity of such historical materials, it is difficult to say what it really represents from the universe of documentation originally created (e.g., we might just possess an interesting array of remnants and fragments, valuable but uneven).

While we can see similar strains throughout these states, such as the similarity in purpose and style of the historical societies and the approaches in copying and indexing the public records, it is less difficult to surmise if there are any noticeable differences between the states due to their historical, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. Maryland was a border state, Delaware barely a state at all in this period, Florida part of a foreign territory, and two of the others part of the Deep South—leaders in the increasing sectionalism that characterized the second half of the period under study. However, there appears to be more common elements, in both method and motive, in these Atlantic states in their preservation and management of archival records. The main differences would be, perhaps, only how much their records suffered from the Civil War. But, I must admit, this is only conjecture on my part; the real history of the archival development in these six Atlantic states has yet to be told.

A Commentary on the Research on the Archival History of Six Atlantic States

Given that a large number of individuals enter the archival profession from the field of history or argue for the continuing importance of history as a core knowledge, surprisingly little research has been done on the history of this profession.⁷⁵ The value of archival history should be unmistakable and certainly not controversial. It can be used in archival self-evaluation and planning, to understand contemporary issues facing the archival profession, as case studies for archival education and training, to understand the development and nature of recordkeeping, and to support the scholarly bent of archivists (especially those viewing themselves as historians).⁷⁶ Yet, consider these facts. We still lack a comprehensive history of American archival development. Calls for rectifying such deficiencies have gone unheeded. Butterfield over forty years ago wrote this: "It is unfortunate that the early history of autograph collecting in this country has never been studied with any care. . . . Historians have thought it beneath their notice, and books by collectors and dealers are merely anecdotal. A thorough account would make a valuable chapter in American cultural history and tell us much about a curious and, as some think, misguided race of men."⁷⁷ Patricia Adams, considering the impact of the Historical Records Survey, stated (and, perhaps, overstated) that "as preservers of the nation's past, archivists should look to their own past before embarking on new records programs."⁷⁸ Others, myself and H. G. Jones included, have issued calls for more systematic research on archival development, but these calls have been largely ignored. As Jones related thirty years ago:

No detailed analysis of the public records of an American state appears to have been made previously. . . . The need for such works is great, however, and it is hoped that the present publication will stimulate the production of similar but better studies for the other states of the Union.⁷⁹

The need remains. Consider what we have here for these six Atlantic states. There is not a single comprehensive published history of development of archives in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia, or Florida. Between 1973 and 1987 I wrote a series of articles on the development of Maryland archives and, appalled by the lack of interest in the topic by other researchers and other archivists, I am in the process of revising and updating this subject into a volume; alas, it will be the first state archival history since Jones's volume on North Carolina! But

the problem is much deeper.

The era of the early republic was a formative period for the development of the American archival community and the nation's quest to preserve its documentary heritage: it was the start of the historical society movement, the commencement of documentary editing, and the beginning of governmental support for records preservation and management. At the same time in Europe, core archival principles (still in use) were beginning to be drafted and experimented with. Although these principles would not be introduced into America until the beginning of the twentieth century, the kinds of conditions supporting their formation were present in both continents. Yet, such topics are largely ignored by archivists and historians. Except for a few general works like those by Dunlap, Posner, Van Tassel, and Whitehill, an individual studying archival development in these six Atlantic states in this period has to rely upon scattered articles that mostly provide biographies of key players, histories of institutions, and light, overview descriptions of efforts to protect public records.

An analysis of the chronological appearance of these studies also reveals the lack of interest we have displayed in archival history. The works stretch in time from the late 1920s to the early 1990s, but there is no evidence of any burgeoning time when interest was high.

*Chronological Appearance of Writings on Archival History in
Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina*

1920s	3
1930s	1
1940s	1
1950s	3
1960s	4
1970s	5
1980s	2
1990s	1

It is no wonder that historians who conduct studies relevant or related to archival history tend to ignore the topic.⁸⁰

What we need are both new and old approaches to the study of American archival history. New approaches could consist of regional and cultural comparisons, international comparisons, formation of institutional development models, and even prosopographical analyses of who constitutes the archival profession. Old but still neglected approaches could include

institutional histories, biographical studies, state and regional histories, and thematic histories. But, as the research on the history of archival development in these Atlantic states reveals, we have too little of the traditional approaches and nothing of new approaches. My essay here *should* be revised and redone in the light of new and original research on this topic, but it is hard to be optimistic that it will be.

It is curious, for example, that we lack any real understanding of the cultural aspects of archival development in these Atlantic states. We mostly have straightforward narratives of institutional development or portraits of individuals in heroic efforts to preserve some aspect of our documentary heritage. Anthropologist James Peacock provided a perspective that we can reflect upon:

Ceremonies and rituals, myths and legends—are "thick" with meanings; they instill into form a plethora of values, ideas, and experiences. Encounter with such forms is inevitably confusing, but the confusing richness of meaning leads to deeper understanding, provided we sort out the patterns and principles behind the meaning.⁸¹

Historical records repositories, individual autograph collections, and edited volumes of documentary sources are all forms of ritual and ceremony and, sometimes, are the products of those trying to develop or sustain certain perspectives on the past, even mythic versions. But we have often failed to sort out the patterns and principles behind the meaning. Where are the new historians of archives? Why is it that the twenty-year-old public history programs have failed to generate interest in such topics? When will the newly developing, comprehensive graduate archival education programs support the study of the history of recordkeeping and the development of archives?⁸² I continue to sense that archivists do not consider any of this very important, and, if we do not, who will?

ENDNOTES

1. Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 122.
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4. George H. Callcott, *History in the United States 1800-1860: Its Practice and Purpose* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 109-119 (quote on p. 109).
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33. Philip M. Hamer, "The Records of Southern History," *Journal of Southern History* 5 (February 1939): 3-17, and J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, "Three Centuries of Southern Records, 1607-1907," *Journal of Southern History* 10 (February 1944): 3-36, are reasonable descriptions of such problems.
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37. Posner, *American State Archives*, p. 183.
38. Josephine Hart Brandon, "A History of the Official Records of the Colony and State of Georgia," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1974, pp. 211-12.
39. A. S. Salley, Jr., "Preservation of South Carolina History," *North Carolina Historical Review* 4 (April 1927): 147-148.
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41. Woody, "Records of South Carolina," p. 252.
42. Salley, "Preservation of South Carolina History," pp. 148-149; Posner, *American State Archives*, p. 246.
43. Woody, "Records of South Carolina," pp. 248-50.
44. Theodore H. Jack, "The Preservation of Georgia History," *North Carolina Historical Review* 4 (July 1927): 241.

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48. Adams, *Life and Writings of Jared Sparks*, I, p. 486.
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50. Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Problems with Record Keeping in Early Eighteenth Century London: Some Pictorial Representation of the State Paper Office, 1705-1706," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 6 (October 1979): 219-26.
51. Salley, "Preservation of South Carolina History," p. 149.
52. Woody, "Records of South Carolina," pp. 250-51.
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54. *Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly . . . December Session 1822*, pp. 84, 86.
55. See William S. Price, Jr., "Plowing Virgin Fields: State Support for Southern Archives, Particularly North Carolina," *Carolina Comments* 29 (March 1981): 41-47.
56. For consideration of the preservation of historical sources via printing refer to Lester J. Cappon, "American Historical Editors before Jared Sparks: 'they will plant a forest . . .,'" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 30 (July 1973): 375-400. See also, for example, Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters & Samuel Johnson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), for some stimulating discussion of the impact of print on literature.
57. Salley, "Preservation of South Carolina History," p. 149.
58. Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, p. 208.
59. *A Sketch of the History of Maryland, during the Three First Years after Its Settlement: To Which Is Prefixed, a Copious Introduction* (Baltimore: Edward J. Coale, 1811), pp. vii-viii.
60. Jack, "Preservation of Georgia History," pp. 241-43; Brandon, "A History of the Official Records," pp. 222-23. The documents related to this effort are published in Lilla Mills Hawes and Albert S. Britt, Jr., eds., *The Search for Georgia's Colonial Records*, Georgia Historical Society Collections, vol. 18 (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1976).
61. Woody, "Records of South Carolina," pp. 252-53, 256-57; Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, pp. 58, 96, 101; Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 184. There was an

earlier effort in the late 1820s as well; Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, p. 183, and Posner, *American State Archives*, p. 246.

62. Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, pp. 57-58, 183.

63. See my "A Century of Frustration: The Movement for the Founding of the State Archives in Maryland, 1811-1935," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 78 (Summer 1983): 106-117.

64. We have to bear in mind that the early histories were sometimes indistinguishable from the documentary editions in that they contained large quantities of reproduced historical records.

65. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), p. 49.

66. While I am a firm advocate for selection and publication of certain records as a means to gain stronger public interest in and support for the preservation of our documentary heritage, this is not the manner in which most documentary editors have argued their cause. Modern documentary editors seem to hold to the view that documentary editing is a viable alternative to the preservation of and access to archival records. Yet the costs of such labors and the changing electronic information technology suggest other and better means. For my views on this topic, see my "Archivists and the Use of Archival Records: Or, A View from the World of Documentary Editing," *Provenance*, forthcoming.

67. *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

68. Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

69. Hamer, "The Records of Southern History," p. 9.

70. Philip M. Hamer, "Henry Laurens of South Carolina—The Man and His Papers," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 77 (January-December 1965): 8.

71. Hamer, "Henry Laurens," p. 10.

72. At the least, we can detect in the letter-writing manuals of this period such advice and guidance. These manuals were regularly published from before the early republic and have continued to appear to the present; they represent a subject worthy of study by archivists and historians wanting to understand the social construction of letters and the attitudes of their creators toward such documents.

73. Hamer, "Henry Laurens," pp. 10-11.

74. David Ridgely to Levin Handy, 4 October 1841, David Ridgely of Annapolis Papers, MS. 1603, Maryland Historical Society.

75. There are, for example, not many highlights which can be added to our studies on American archival history since the publication of my "American Archival History: Its Development, Needs, and Opportunities," *American Archivist* 46 (Winter 1983): 31-41. In fairness, the same can be said for other disciplines. Despite a flourishing of interest in library history and the fact that many graduate archival education programs are located in library and information science schools, there has been a only modest effort to preserve the archives of libraries. See my "Library History and Library Archives in the United States," *Libraries and Culture* 26 (Fall 1991): 569-93.

76. I have discussed this in more detail in my "On the Value of Archival History in the United States," *Libraries & Culture* 23 (Spring 1988): 135-151.

77. "Draper's Predecessors," pp. 11-12.

78. Patricia L. Adams, "Assessing the Historical Value of the Historical Records Survey," *Midwestern Archivist* 12, no. 1 (1987): 10.

79. H. G. Jones, *For History's Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. viii.

80. I argue this point in my "The Concept of Public Memory and Its Impact on Archival Programming," *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 122-135.

81. *The Anthropological Lens: Harsh Light, Soft Focus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 71.

82. I have proposed this as a major aspect of study in graduate archival education; see my "The History of Primary Sources in Graduate Education: An Archival Perspective," *Special Collections* 4, no. 2 (1990): 39-78.

Trans-Mountain States: Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee

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Introduction

The rise of a historical consciousness in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan prior to 1861 differed sharply from the original thirteen colonies. In contrast to the latter group, these states in the trans-mountain west had limited population, few large cities, and a very small number of wealthy citizens who could devote their leisure time and financial resources to historical activities. There were other differences between the states of the two regions as well. The main historical focus of the eastern seaboard states in the period prior to the Civil War was the American Revolution, its patriot leaders, and the experiment in democratic institutions which the Revolution fostered. Although several of the trans-mountain states were also involved in the Revolution, their historical activities prior to 1861 were centered upon the frontier, its settlement, military leaders, and Indian warfare.

The approach taken in this study is to review the rise of historical consciousness in the trans-mountain region in four areas—the formation and activities of historical societies, the preservation of public archives, the role of private collectors, and historical publications.¹

Historical Societies

The formation of historical societies and related cultural organizations in the newly formed "over-mountain" states reflected the rise of historical consciousness of this frontier area. As was noted above, these states were not among the original "thirteen," although some had been claimed by them prior to statehood, and several of the states in the Ohio Valley were involved in the struggles of the American Revolution. Furthermore, many of the settlers had roots in the original colonies and viewed independence from England as the beginning of a new era, dedicated to freedom and democratic values.

Led by Tennessee in 1820, all of the over-mountain states had formed historical societies by 1861. Although the states were located in two different geographical sections of the country with different backgrounds, the historical societies had much in common. They were formed by prominent citizens, usually connected in some way with the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of state government and by teachers, historians, and clergy. They were incorporated by the state legislature and usually located in the state capital. Membership was open to all white adults, usually for a nominal annual membership fee of one dollar. The rolls of the societies and the lists of officers seldom included women in any numbers, although they were not banned from membership. Most societies required that members live in the state for a certain number of years and be of a certain age. All of the societies had a category of "honorary members" of individuals elected by trustees, usually because of their national reputation and because they might be potential donors of books, manuscripts, or other historical materials. The Michigan Historical Society elected key Indian chiefs in the state as honorary members.

Historical societies held regular meetings during the year, but the highlight was the annual meeting which often lasted for many hours and sometimes more than one day. An address by the president of the society or a prominent citizen—often two to three hours in length—was the main part of the annual meeting and might, in retrospect, explain the small attendance at many of these meetings. Many of the addresses, which were devoted to some important event in the history of the region, were published separately or in a volume of *Transactions* or *Proceedings* of the society.

A number of historical societies encouraged social activities, not only to increase attendance at meetings but also as a way to recruit members. Some meetings resembled country fairs or church-related camp meetings, attracting hundreds of local citizens and their families. The Cuyahoga

County (Ohio) Historical Society hosted a picnic in 1858 which attracted an estimated five thousand people. It was so popular that a similar picnic was held two years later. Other societies celebrated the anniversaries of historic events of their state or region with meetings, parades, and lectures.²

The main activity of all of the historical societies involved the collection and preservation of the historical materials of the region. There was a widespread concern among the leadership of these frontier societies that the vital early history of the region was being lost, that the historical records were not being preserved, and that the pioneer settlers were passing from the scene before their stories were told and recorded. Typical of announced aims was that of the Kentucky Historical Society, founded in 1838. Its main objective was "the collection and preservation of whatever may relate to the Antiquities, the Natural, Civil, Literary, and Ecclesiastical History of the country but more particularly of the State of Kentucky and the Mississippi Valley."³ In more specific terms, the collecting scope included books, pamphlets, newspapers, government publications, historical manuscripts, geological specimens, Indian artifacts, and other memorabilia. It is obvious from the list of acquisitions of the societies that they envisioned not only a library or facility to conduct research, but an exhibit or display area as well.

The success of historical societies in establishing libraries and research collections varied. The Alabama Historical Society was able to collect only a few items during its early years, "consisting of nothing more than the current newspapers of the State, generously contributed by intelligent editors and proprietors, a few old books of no great value, and a small collection of fossils and Indian relics."⁴ The Chicago Historical Society was more successful. It acquired seven thousand volumes annually and thirty-one thousand volumes during its first five years. The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio collected only a thousand volumes in two decades.⁵

The primary method of building libraries was accomplished by the request for gifts or exchanges with other organizations. Many societies contacted the state legislature or branches of the federal government for sets of public documents. Many societies issued circulars, listing the publications needed. The Alabama Historical Society printed five hundred such circulars for distribution to state and federal legislators. The Cincinnati Historical Society circularized other historical societies for donations of "books, antiquities, and manuscripts." The Historical Society of Michigan adopted similar procedures for building a research library. One popular practice was to elect prominent writers as honorary members and request complimentary copies of their books.⁶

Another objective of most of the societies was the encouragement and promotion of historical studies of the state or region, not only by the collection and preservation of historical materials for historians to use, but by sponsoring and promoting the publication of the historical studies. Indeed, many of the founders of the societies were already involved in the writing of regional histories and had formed a state historical society to aid in the collection of historical materials.

Tennessee. Tennessee was the fourth state to establish a historical society.⁷ It was the inspiration of Judge John Haywood, considered the "Father of Tennessee History." On 1 July 1820 the organizational meeting was held in the courthouse in Nashville, attended by a number of public spirited citizens. Judge Haywood was elected president. The primary purpose of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society was the "collection and preservation [of the record] of important events in the history of the State of Tennessee and inquiries into the antiquities of the western country, etc. . . ."⁸ In addition to these overall objectives, Judge Haywood had a personal motive in founding a historical society. He was writing a history of Tennessee and was having difficulty locating historical records and other materials. He viewed the society as a vehicle for locating, collecting, and preserving such information. His objectives were met, for in the months that followed "many valuable historical contributions" were received and used by Haywood in his research.⁹ But the society did not enjoy a long history. The Tennessee Antiquarian Society held its last meeting on 22 August 1822. Judge Haywood's two volumes of Tennessee history up to 1796 were published in 1823.¹⁰

There was no further organized activity in Tennessee until 1833 when the historian, James G. M. Ramsey, founded the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society in Knoxville. Its purpose was to invite and preserve contributions "relating to early Tennessee history." It remained "fairly active until the advent of the Civil War" but lost all of its collections when Union soldiers burned the home of Ramsey in 1862.¹¹

The main statewide historical organization, the Historical Society of Tennessee, was founded on 1 May 1849, due largely to the efforts of Nathaniel Cross and John Eakins, supported "chiefly from the professional and business leaders of the city. . . ."¹² The early meetings were well attended but interest soon declined, membership dwindled, and in 1851 it suspended operations.

Six years later, Colonel A. W. Putnam, whose *History of Middle Tennessee* was published in 1859, led the reorganization of the society. Valuable historical manuscripts and other materials were collected and

received including a miniature of Governor John Sevier, the original manuscript 1780 articles of government, 246 autographed letters, an Indian peace pipe, minerals and fossils from the upper Mississippi River, a Sioux tobacco pouch, the flag of the 3rd Tennessee Regiment flown in the recent war with Mexico, and a sword worn during the Seminole War, 1812-14.¹³ Not all of the donations to the society related to Tennessee. At a meeting on 25 March 1857, Dr. J. C. Newnan presented the society with a sacrificial knife from the Temple of Chalula, near Puebla, Mexico. It was carefully noted that the knife had been used by the Aztecs "in cutting out the hearts of children offered in sacrifice."¹⁴ In February 1860 the society received an Egyptian mummy donated by Jeremiah G. Harris, a purser in the United States Navy.¹⁵ It is obvious that the society contemplated a museum or exhibit function in addition to a library.

Ohio. The most heavily populated state in the over-mountain area, Ohio, was widely represented by historical organizations. The first attempt to form a statewide historical organization took place on 1 February 1822 when, as one observer described, a group of "worthy and distinguished pioneers assembled in the evening and a very interesting and delightful conversation took place about the early settlements of the state."¹⁶ At midnight a motion was presented to organize a historical society. Governor Jeremiah Morrow, the chair of the meeting, concurred, but it was reported that he "immediately reunited in conversation with others, and somewhere between two o'clock and daylight, those who remained separated without an organization of the society." No explanation was given for the lack of actions except the comment of one participant in the meeting: "The men of that day did not sufficiently value the record of their own deeds."¹⁷

Nearly a decade elapsed before a more successful attempt was made to establish a state historical organization in Ohio. Following the enactment of legislative authorization, Benjamin Tappen and twenty-nine persons from various sections of the state met and formed the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio on 31 December 1831. The only restraint placed by the Ohio legislature was "that the funds of said corporation shall not be used and appropriated to the purpose of banking."¹⁸ The Ohio society prospered during the 1830s. Its meetings were well attended and its membership was broad-based throughout the state. William Henry Harrison addressed one of the annual meetings with a discourse on "the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio."¹⁹ In 1838-39 the society published *Transactions*, containing reprints of the annual addresses.²⁰

The 1840s witnessed a decline in support for the society. Membership dwindled, meetings were held sporadically, one in 1841, another in 1844, and the next in 1848. Recognizing the serious difficulties encountered by the society, the leadership decided to merge with the Cincinnati Historical Society in 1849 and moved its headquarters to Cincinnati. But even the merger did not solve the problem, for within a few years the society finally became dormant. Its books, manuscripts, and other holdings were transferred to the Cincinnati Public Library, where they remained until 1868 when the state society was reorganized.²¹

Fortunately, historical activities in Ohio were not limited to the state historical society during the years prior to 1861. Numerous historical organizations were established throughout the state. The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ashtabula County was organized in 1838 and by 1850 had collected a library of 700 pages of manuscripts relating to the early history and settlement of northern Ohio. By 1854 the society had become dormant, but its collection was later given to the Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society in Cleveland in July 1874.²²

Other regional historical societies were established and had a few active years before disbanding. The Logan Historical Society lasted from 1841 to 1843; the Marietta Historical Association operated from 1841 to 1850; and the Historical and Genealogical Society of Norwalk Seminary began in 1841, but by 1850 it was reported that the organization "has long since been suspended." The Historical Society of Cayahoga County was also short lived. It was founded in 1857 but did not survive the Civil War. The Tallmadge Historical Society of Summit County (1858), the Firelands Historical Society (1857), the Cincinnati Pioneer Association (1856), and Lorain County Pioneer Association (1857) were other regional Ohio historical organizations active before 1861.²³

The distinguished Cincinnati Historical Society also marked its founding in the pre-Civil War period. It was established in August 1844 with the principal aim of "the collection, preservation and diffusion of Historical, Biographical, and Antiquarian matters, more particularly such as related to the western country."²⁴ It conducted an active collecting program, built a fine library, and in 1848 published S. P. Hildreth's *Pioneer History*. In 1849 it merged with the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio.²⁵

Illinois. Illinois, with its rich history of Spanish, French, and British occupation, formed a state historical society in 1827, due primarily to the effort of James Hall, a prominent and active public leader. Hall was born in Philadelphia in 1793 and as a young man moved to the sparsely settled

Illinois Territory. He later wrote that he was "attracted by a romantic disposition, a thirst for adventure, and a desire to see the rough scenes of the frontier." He was not disappointed. After studying the law and setting up a legal practice, he became half-owner and editor of the *Illinois Gazette*. Soon after he entered politics and won election to the Illinois 4th Judicial Circuit and in 1827 was elected state treasurer. Hall also took an active role in the cultural, educational, and intellectual life of Illinois.²⁶

Of particular interest to Hall was the frontier and the manner in which it molded and influenced the lives of settlers, as well as his strong belief in "the uniqueness of the American Experience." He wrote for Timothy Flint's *Western Monthly Review* and in 1828 he published *The Western Souvenir, a Christmas and New Years Gift for 1829*, a collection of stories and poems, many of which he wrote himself.²⁷

It was this interest in western history that prompted Hall to issue a call for the formation of a statewide historical society. A meeting was held in Vandalia, then the capital, on 8 December 1827 and attended by "a number of gentlemen, chiefly members of the bench and bar of the Supreme Court then in session."²⁸ The title "Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois" was chosen, and Hall was elected president. He came prepared and immediately appointed ten standing committees to carry out the mission of the organization "to collect, preserve, and disseminate authentic information on the history and resources of Illinois." Hall issued a request for "minerals, fossils, antiquities, and manuscripts which illustrate the characteristics and development of the region."²⁹ The Committee of Correspondence was instructed "to obtain a record of the climate of Illinois, all state publications, local newspapers, and all books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the object of the Society." Later the assignment was broadened to include "the capabilities of the State for Internal Improvement."³⁰

Hall's carefully developed plan called for a long-term program for the society, but unfortunately he could not persuade his colleagues to carry out their assignments. By 1830, after Hall left Vandalia, the organization "slipped into oblivion." Several explanations were given for the decline of the Illinois Antiquarian and Historical Society. Despite Hall's drive and leadership abilities, he was deeply involved in factional political struggles in the state and alienated many members of the historical society. The difficulty of reaching Vandalia, then surrounded by swamps and virtually impassable roads, restricted attendance at meetings. Perhaps more significant was the fundamental explanation given by the historian of the historical society, who concluded "simply that Illinoisians were not yet

ready for the advanced stage of cultural life implied in the formation of a historical society."³¹

The distinguished Chicago Historical Society also was established prior to the Civil War, although its national reputation was established much later. It was planned as early as March 1854 but not incorporated by the state until February 1857. The general object of the society was "to encourage historical enquiry and spread historical information . . . to embrace alike their aboriginal and modern history."³² Eligibility in the society was limited to two-year residents of Illinois and only to those who planned to remain in the state. A twenty-dollar initiation fee was levied along with an annual assessment of ten dollars. To add to its exclusiveness, unanimous approval was required for election to membership. An early effort of the Chicago group was its collection of books and historical manuscripts. As was noted above, it collected thirty-one thousand volumes during its first five years.³³

Michigan. Michigan was still a territory with a population of less than thirty thousand when, on 23 June 1828, Lewis Cass, Henry R. Schoolcraft, and Major Henry Whiting brought together a group of interested citizens in Detroit to found the Historical Society of Michigan. Their aims were similar to the historical societies in other states in the trans-mountain area—"to collect and preserve the natural, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical and aboriginal history of the state."³⁴ Most of the founders were from New England and the Middle Atlantic states, many of whom had belonged to historical societies there. Lewis Cass was chosen first president of the society and took an active role in its affairs. By 1827 he had already attained a national reputation for his role in the War of 1812 and as governor of the Territory of Michigan. Even after he became secretary of war under President Jackson, ambassador to France, and later United States senator, he continued his interest in the work of the society.³⁵

The annual meeting of the society, featuring an address by a prominent member, highlighted each year's activities. Lewis Cass presented the first address in 1829 on the subject "Observations upon the Early Conditions of the North American Indians," and the following year Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the Indian agent for the Upper Great Lakes, delivered "Some Remarks Upon the Origin and Character of the North American Indians." Major Henry Whiting and John Biddle followed in subsequent years with addresses devoted to "Discourses on the History of Michigan" and "Early Land Development of the Territory," respectively. These addresses were published in 1834 as *Historical and Scientific Sketches of Michigan*.³⁶

The society also gave priority to collecting materials for its museum and library and, at the second annual meeting, Henry Schoolcraft presented a manuscript on the "Life of John Johnston Family of Sault Ste. Marie," John Biddle presented a manuscript map of Florida, and Lewis Cass gave the society his collection of geological specimens which he acquired during his famous expedition to Lake Superior and northern Minnesota in 1820. Among the other artifacts received were a set of elk antlers, a turtle shell from the Mackinac area, and a "collection of minerals and specimens of organic remains."³⁷

One of the most important gifts was presented to the society on 18 February 1838, by Lewis Cass, the famous "Pontiac Manuscript," a firsthand account in French of the siege of Detroit by the Ottawa chieftain Pontiac in 1863. This unique account of a historic event during the early years of British control of Detroit was translated into English by Louis Fasquelle, professor of modern languages at the University of Michigan, and used widely by historians of the French and British regimes in the west.³⁸ Journals of early French and British fur traders were also located and added to the library of the society. The collection of Judge Augustus Woodward was presented in 1857, and this collection included autographed letters written by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Albert Gallatin, General Henry Dearborn, Governor William Hull, and DeWitt Clinton.³⁹

Indian artifacts were eagerly sought after by Henry Schoolcraft, Lewis Cass, Charles Trowbridge, and other society leaders. Indian deeds, peace medals, wampum, silver gorgets, trade goods, and a scalping knife were among the early acquisitions of the organization. The breadth of the society's collecting activities is revealed in the gift of the widow of George K. Griswold, a United States Navy purser and prominent Detroit resident. Included were "one ship's hammock, skull of a porpoise, horn of a rhinoceros, . . . eggs of an ostrich, cone from an African pine, large black horned beetle. . . ."⁴⁰

Despite active beginnings, the society soon lost momentum and began to decline. Lewis Cass moved to Washington in 1831 to become Andrew Jackson's secretary of war. In 1836 he left for Paris to become United States ambassador to France. Major Henry Whiting was reassigned to army duty in Florida, and Henry Schoolcraft, who lived on Mackinac Island, found Detroit too far to attend meetings regularly. Between 1841 and 1847 the society became dormant.

In 1857 officers of the Detroit Young Men's Society, part of the growing lyceum movement, spearheaded the revitalization of the historical society. Charles Walker of Detroit, the secretary of the society, offered

rooms for the organization, and meetings were held there until 1861 when the society again folded its operations. It was reorganized in 1874 in Lansing and continues to this day as an active historical organization.⁴¹

Indiana. The founding of the original state historical society in Indiana followed a pattern similar to that of other states in the midwest. It was established in December 1830 as a result of the leadership and efforts of John Hay Farnham, Benjamin Parke, and several other influential citizens, including business leaders, judges, and public officials. Like many of the founders, Farnham was an easterner, having been born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1791. After graduation from Harvard College in 1811, he moved to Frankfort, Kentucky, and in 1819 settled in Jeffersonville, Indiana. From 1822 to 1833 he served as clerk to the Indiana Senate and also built a successful law practice. He was active in a variety of public causes, including the establishment of free public schools, temperance laws, and the "human guardianship of the poor."⁴²

Farnham was also fascinated with the westward movement and especially the history and development of Indiana. While in Massachusetts, he had been a member of several historical organizations, including the prestigious American Antiquarian Society. He recognized the need for a historical society in Indiana. After consulting with several influential friends who shared his interests, he issued a call in the Indianapolis newspaper for an organizational meeting of the society. The meeting on 11 December 1830, was well attended, including more than half of the members of the Indiana General Assembly. A constitution and bylaws, prepared by Farnham, were adopted, and a slate of distinguished Indiana citizens, including three Supreme Court justices, was elected as officers. Annual membership dues were set at one dollar.⁴³

Following the practice of eastern historical societies, a number of honorary members were elected, including William Henry Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe and governor of Indiana; Lewis Cass, the United States secretary of war; Edward Coles, governor of Illinois; and Albert Gallatin, former secretary of the United States treasury in the administration of Thomas Jefferson.

Periodic meetings were held in 1831, but the society's main activity was collecting books, documents, and manuscripts relating to Indiana and western history. Farnham contacted other state historical societies and states requesting copies of their publications. He also wrote to leading Indiana pioneers and asked them to contribute a "memoir of your personal history." Farnham wrote, "The time is rapidly drawing near when the living actors in those interesting and eventful scenes will be able to speak

only in the records they may chuse to leave behind them."⁴⁴ Farnham was especially interested in memoirs of participants in the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Under the leadership of John Farnham and Benjamin Parke, who served as president, the Indiana Historical Society prospered. Meetings were well attended, and important collections of books and manuscripts were acquired. But in 1833 Farnham contracted the dreaded cholera while treating the sick, and he died. The cholera epidemic also struck Benjamin Parke's family. He lost a son and grandson from the disease and died of "grief and consumption" two years later at the age of fifty-eight.⁴⁵ Despite the widespread interest, no leaders were found to replace Farnham and Parke, and the historical society languished. A meeting was held in 1835, but not again until 1841.

John Dillon, the state librarian and historian of Indiana, made another attempt to revitalize the society in the 1840s, but Dillon soon became overburdened with his own work on the history of Indiana. No one stepped forward to replace Dillon, and the society became dormant. Despite a third futile attempt in 1859 to reactivate the society, it was not until 1886 that the Indiana Historical Society was reorganized on a permanent basis.⁴⁶

In addition to the state historical society, two local historical societies were established in Indiana prior to 1861. The Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society was founded in February 1839, and the Historical Society of the County of Vigo in 1843. By 1861 both were dormant.⁴⁷

Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi. The state historical societies in Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi—the remaining states in the trans-mountain area—were established prior to 1861 but accomplished little. The Kentucky State Historical Society was incorporated in 1838 and, under the leadership of Judge John Rowan, it received the enthusiastic support of lawyers, teachers, historians, and business leaders of the state. It also began a program to develop a library of books, historical manuscripts, and "antiquities." By 1842 the society's campaign resulted in the acquisition of "820 bound volumes, 5000 pamphlets, 68 volumes of newspapers, and a collection of correspondence of early settlers of the region. . . ." Regrettably, according to society leaders, the library was "not rich in the records of its own country," for most of its volumes related to the eastern United States.⁴⁷ In 1843 the death of John Rowan left the society without strong leadership and it floundered—the "old enthusiasm gone."⁴⁸ By 1852 it was no longer in existence; it was not revived until 1878.

The Historical Society of Alabama was founded in 1850, largely due to the efforts of Dr. Basil Manley, president of the University of Alabama, who was possessed with the evangelistic fervor "for education and the enabling features of patriotism and nationalism."⁴⁹ Manley developed a plan to organize the Alabama Historical Society with the objective "to discover, procure, preserve and diffuse whatever may relate to the national, civil, literary and ecclesiastical history of the state of Alabama, and of the states in connection with her." This was the charge presented to the interested persons who attended the organizational meeting in Tuscaloosa on 8 July 1850 and later included in the act of incorporation in 1852.⁵⁰

Under Manley's active leadership, sixty-four members were enrolled the first year. Meetings were held annually at the commencement ceremonies of the University of Alabama featuring presentations on some phase of Alabama history. A major objective of the founders was to secure "a copy of every book and newspaper published in the state and all documents illustrative of the history of the United States."⁵¹

Unfortunately, like so many historical organizations of the period, the Alabama society was sustained largely by the interest of a single individual, Basil Manley. When he left Alabama in 1855, the society declined and went out of existence within a few years.⁵²

The Mississippi Historical Society, like that of Alabama, was also the inspiration of one man, Benjamin L. D. Wailes. A planter and naturalist of the old Natchez region, Wailes was active in most of the cultural and intellectual activities in Mississippi.⁵³ For nearly forty years Wailes was a trustee of Jefferson College, author of the first geological survey of the state, and president of the first agricultural society in Mississippi. His interest in history prompted him to develop a plan for a state organization in which its major objective was "to collect, preserve, and perpetuate by publication or otherwise, the scattered and perishable memorials, both written and traditional, of our social and political history. . . ." The society was organized on 9 November 1858 and Wailes was elected president.⁵⁴

Wailes immediately conducted a statewide search for books and manuscripts relating to Mississippi, and in the summer of 1859 he travelled to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington to locate additional sources. However, an internal feud between Wailes and other society members erupted and within a year, with only three members left, the society disbanded.⁵⁵

The historical societies in the trans-mountain states founded before 1861 faced many problems similar to those of the more established and heavily populated states on the eastern seaboard, but they also faced unique challenges. Prior to 1861, the population of the trans-mountain states was

relatively small compared to their eastern counterparts. There were no cities or population centers like Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. Detroit in 1830 had a population of about three thousand; the whole state had only thirty-two thousand residents. The state of Indiana, with a population of 343,000 in 1830, was still considered one hundred percent rural by the federal census.

The location of state capitals, the traditional headquarters of state historical societies and other cultural organizations, was also a major challenge. The selection of a capital often had little to do with a population center, but rather its geographic location within the state. Vandalia, the headquarters of the Illinois Historical Society, was located in an isolated rural area, surrounded by swamps and marshes and accessed by roads impassable for many months of the year because of rain and mud. In 1832, five years after the Illinois Historical Society was founded, Vandalia had only eight hundred inhabitants, hardly enough to sustain an active historical organization. Furthermore, the population of the rural frontier areas was not static. Settlers were constantly on the move, "pulling up stakes," and migrating to other towns and states.

Another serious problem facing the historical societies was the difficulty of getting individuals to devote the time needed to form and develop the organization. Frontier settlers in the period prior to 1861 had limited time to devote to the volunteer work of historical societies. As a result, membership in the historical organizations was always small, usually leaving to a few dedicated members the burden of running the historical society. When the founders and leaders died, became incapacitated due to illness, or moved out of state, the societies often floundered, declined, and sometimes went out of existence.

Another related problem was that some founders could not even get their fellow officers and members to work on behalf of the society. Taliaferro P. Shaffner, a founder and corresponding secretary of the Kentucky Historical Society, expressed these frustrations in 1847 when he commented, "I have been the Society for several years."⁵⁶ After studying in great detail the early history and development of the Indiana Historical Society, the historian Lana Ruegamer described the ingredients for a successful mid-nineteenth-century statewide historical organization: "One person willing to do all the work himself and to spur his fellow members to support the work at least by their presence at meetings."⁵⁷

Public Archives

The accomplishments of historical societies in the trans-mountain states prior to 1861 were limited, especially in sustained programs to collect and preserve historical records relating to the settlement and early history of the region. Nonetheless, it was clearly evident that the founders and leaders of historical societies recognized the value of historical records and the need to actively collect and preserve them. Given this interest, which was expressed in the bylaws of each of the historical organizations in the eight over-mountain states, it is surprising that so little attention was given to the preservation of the public records of the state and local units of government during the same period. This neglect of public records was not limited to the states in the trans-mountain west. It occurred in practically every other state in the nation as well.

During the period under consideration none of these states established public archives. This development did not occur until the turn of the next century. None of the states had a specialized or central facility for the preservation of public archives; each government office or department preserved its own records. In a few states like Alabama and Kentucky, the secretary of state was made the custodian of the records of the executive and legislative branches of state government. In Tennessee, the first state constitution gave the secretary of state custody of a "fair register of all the official acts and proceedings of the governor" and of "all papers, minutes relative thereto." It also made him "keeper of the bills and proceedings of the legislature, recorder of all bonds and commissions, and keeper of the seal."⁵⁸ In 1823 the secretary of state was assigned responsibility for preserving the land records of Tennessee.

Although none of the states had adequate facilities for the storage and preservation of archival records, the governor of Alabama in 1852 "authorized and required 'for the better protection of the public records' to cause suitable shelves to be constructed in the executive and state offices" in the new capitol building.⁵⁹ When office storage space became crowded, records were often placed in basements, attics, and warehouses. John Dillon, the state librarian of Indiana, reported in 1845 that "it is perhaps proper to report that confused masses of books and papers belonging to the state of Indiana, and consisting principally of manuscripts and printed documents relating to the legislative and executive proceedings of State Government, are lying in the garret of the large building in the lot known as the Governor's Circle."⁶⁰

The decision as to which public records were preserved was not based upon the interests or needs of historians, genealogists, or other

researchers, but rather the almost exclusive needs of government officials. Furthermore, most state and local public records were considered confidential and were available only to designated public officers. Even then, unfortunately, the records preserved were usually related to legal matters—wills, marriage licenses, birth and death records, land grants, plat books, tax rolls, incorporation papers, and similar documents. Correspondence, reports, and other historical records were discarded. The files of the governor and other elected state officials, state legislators, and judges were considered private and were usually removed by the incumbent when he or she left office, or they were destroyed.⁶¹

Even the historical records that were preserved in state offices were not always cared for in a professional manner. Stamp collectors were often given access to older records and selected at will the items they wanted, including prior to 1847 the stampless covers which usually included the message on the reverse side. Autograph collectors also recognized the inactive files of public offices as the source of key documents needed to complete a series such as a set of signers of the Declaration of Independence. Often the original document was given to such collectors with the understanding that a "copy" would be given in return. Sometimes stamps and autographed letters were sold to collectors by enterprising clerks.⁶²

Historians and other writers borrowed large groups of public records from various state offices. They often used the ploy that such a loan of records would ensure that proper recognition would be given to a particular state or public official in their published work. Lyman Draper, for example, borrowed thousands of items in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio for his proposed books on George Rogers Clark, Simon Kenton, Daniel Boone, and other frontier Indian fighters.⁶³

Fires, floods, tornadoes, and other natural disasters were a constant threat to the preservation of public archives. Many of the public buildings of the pre-Civil War period were made of wood, and all public buildings were heated with stoves and fireplaces. Fires were a constant threat and danger in the public buildings of the era and public records often the victim. In 1805 a raging fire destroyed the stockaded village of Detroit, including all public buildings and the records of the territorial officials. On 14 December 1849, in Montgomery, Alabama, a fire destroyed the state capitol, which had been completed just two years earlier. Fortunately, many valuable public records of the secretary of state, treasurer, Supreme Court, Senate, and House of Representatives were saved by dedicated employees who threw "the contents out of the windows." But other valuable records located on the third floor in the state library could not be reached, so intense was the fire. "The large collection of public documents,

law books, manuscript journals of the General Assembly, historical works. . . valuable papers . . . were destroyed."⁶⁴

Kentucky was another state particularly hard hit by fires and floods. Extensive holdings of public records were destroyed in fires in the state capitol in 1813 and 1824. Sixty-six of the 120 county courthouses were also victims of fires or floods, seventeen of them on more than one occasion.⁶⁵

Trans-mountain states faced other unique problems affecting the preservation of public records, which were not faced by eastern states. As the frontier expanded and vacant land was purchased and developed by new settlers, there was a need to change the location of state capitals to make them more accessible to larger population centers. These moves also necessitated the transfer, usually by wagon, of irreplaceable public records.

The state of Alabama changed its capital five times from 1798 when it was a part of the Mississippi Territory to 1845 when Montgomery was selected as the permanent capital. In the last move, 113 crates of records loaded on thirteen wagons and weighing 26,704 pounds were moved from Tuscaloosa to Montgomery.⁶⁶ In nearby Mississippi, the capital was changed nine times before it ended up in Jackson. Tennessee moved its capital seven times, and Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky were also involved with similar changes. These relocations of the capitals resulted in the loss of many valuable historical records. State officials selected for transfer only those records essential for their daily work. The older records, valuable only for historical research and the "perusal of antiquarians," were sometimes left behind or destroyed. Accidents also occurred enroute from one capital to another, resulting in the loss of valuable public records. In fact, such losses due to the relocation of capitals led to the adage that "Three moves are equivalent to one fire."⁶⁷

The Civil War also resulted in the loss of valuable public and private historical records, especially in the southern and border states. When a possible attack on a state capital was imminent, or anticipated, state officials promptly removed important records to secure sites away from the capital. In April 1865 the approach of federal troops near Montgomery, Alabama, alarmed state officials so much that they "collected the archives and sent them . . . to Eufaula for safe preservation." Other Alabama archives were sent to Augusta, Georgia, for safekeeping. The records were returned to Montgomery in 1865, but many valuable records were lost or destroyed in transit.⁶⁸

Some Union troops also destroyed valuable records by burning and looting public offices and private residences. As was mentioned earlier, the private collection of historical records of F. G. M. Ramsey, the founder of

the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society in Knoxville, was destroyed by a fire accidentally set by a Union soldier.⁶⁹

It is difficult to even estimate how many public records were destroyed due to neglect. From all available evidence, the loss was extensive. The statewide inventories of state archives conducted by the American Historical Association in the early years of the twentieth century attest to this. One distinguished southern historian, Philip Hamer, concluded that the records of Tennessee's history had been "criminally neglected."⁷⁰ This conclusion may be too harsh in applying to all of the states in the trans-mountain region, but it is certainly accurate to say that public archives in the area, prior to 1861 and indeed until the turn of the twentieth century, were sadly neglected.

Private Collectors

The works and contributions of private collectors like Thomas Prince, Jeremy Belknap, Ebenezer Hazard, William Buell Sprague, Peter Force, Jared Sparks, Henry Stevens, Sr., and Israel Tefft are well known, especially in relation to their role in collecting and preserving irreplaceable historical records during the decades prior to the Civil War. Some of these collectors were active in the trans-mountain states and acquired historical records from this area. Israel K. Tefft, a prominent Georgian, amassed a large collection of historical manuscripts, some of which were associated with Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Jared Sparks and Peter Force had contacts in the same area and were interested in records relating to the exploration and early settlement of the area, especially during the colonial period.⁷¹

The trans-mountain region also had its own distinguished collectors who played a major role in acquiring and preserving large groups of historical records relating to the early settlement and history of the frontier region. The motives and collecting style of these men varied. Some were interested in autographs and the documents written by famous frontiersmen. A number of individuals became interested through their participation in historical societies and related cultural organizations. They continued their collecting enterprise after their historical societies disbanded. Most of the area's major collectors, however, were students of history and were engaged in writing a history of an area, a biography of a prominent citizen, or an account of a famous military battle. Since there were no public archival agencies at this time, and few private libraries, these writers had to acquire through gift, loan, or purchase many of the historical records needed in their endeavors. Many of these collections were

subsequently given to or acquired by research libraries and archives and are invaluable sources on the history of the trans-mountain frontier period. Unfortunately, some were lost.

William Tatham of Tennessee and Kentucky was one of the first collectors in the area. Born in England in 1752, he migrated to Virginia in 1769 to work with John Carter, a prominent merchant. Four years later he settled in the Watauga settlement in the "western country," then a part of North Carolina and later Tennessee. After returning to Virginia, Tatham collaborated with John Todd on a manuscript, "A History of the Western Country," the first history of Kentucky. North Carolina became the home of Tatham in 1780 where he studied the law and explored and charted the rivers of North Carolina. He later returned to Virginia to organize the Geographical Department for the state. This and later assignments resulted in his survey and the preparation of detailed maps of Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana, and the lower Mississippi River.⁷²

During his travels as a cartographer, Tatham collected books, manuscripts, and other historical documents relating to these regions. By 1800 his voluminous collection included "all of the known surveys of North America prior to the Revolution and the public economy of the United States."⁷³ While in Tennessee and Kentucky, he supplemented his historical collection with interviews with a number of early pioneer settlers and military leaders.

In 1806 Representative Joseph Clay of Pennsylvania introduced a bill in Congress to purchase Tatham's collection, but it was not passed, unfortunately, for "it would have defined the functions of a National Library for the United States."⁷⁴ A further attempt in 1817 to get congressional support for a subsidy of \$5,000 for the collection also failed. Following Tatham's death in 1819 the Richmond *Enquirer* reported, "He has left behind a valuable stack of maps, plats, charts, and explanatory manuscripts which it is hoped will be carefully preserved."⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the hopes of the *Enquirer* were not realized. This valuable collection relating to the settlement of the trans-mountain west was lost.

Kentucky, rich in history of the frontier west, also produced private collectors. John Dabney Shane, a Presbyterian minister, amassed a large collection relating to the early settlement of Kentucky and the Presbyterian church in that area, which he later sold to Lyman Draper.⁷⁶ Reuben T. Durrett was another successful Kentuckian whose collection, like Shane's, was extensive in scope and historical value. Durrett was born in Newcastle, Kentucky, in 1824, graduated from Brown University, and studied the law in Louisville. He was later an editor of a pro-Whig newspaper. Durrett

was also fascinated by the frontier and its military heroes. His special interest was early settlers and frontiersmen Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, John Filson, James Herrod, and Isaac Shelby. He traveled throughout Kentucky collecting material on the frontier. If he couldn't acquire collections as a gift, he borrowed them, hoping that the owners would forget the transaction. He contacted historical societies and libraries and exchanged his duplicate books, periodicals, and newspapers. He also met pioneer families and town and county clerks, eliciting their support. Durrett also made his collection available to historians who were writing about the frontier. His collection, which consisted of 20,000 volumes, 250 files of pamphlets, and 200 volumes of atlases, maps, and manuscripts, was sold to the University of Chicago for \$22,500 in 1913.⁷⁷

Judge John Barr, a prominent Cleveland lawyer and jurist and officer of the Cleveland Lyceum, began collecting in the 1840s. He contacted early settlers, especially in the Cleveland area and recorded their reminiscences of early life on the Ohio frontier. In 1846 Barr published a short history of Cleveland in *Fisher's National Magazine*. Judge Barr was also active in the Cuyahoga County and other regional historical societies.⁷⁸

Charles Whittlesey of Cleveland was another pioneer collector in Ohio. His field of interest was the settlement of Cleveland and the Western Reserve. He was a prolific writer, an author of the *Early History of Cleveland*, and an active member of the Western Reserve Historical Society.⁷⁹

The rich historical traditions of Mississippi were preserved by another private collector, Benjamin Leonard Covington Wailes, who was born in Georgia in 1807 and later settled in the town of Washington in the old Natchez region. During his lifetime Wailes held many positions. He was a surveyor, cartographer, Indian agent, land officer, employee, legislator, and planter. His main interest was as a naturalist and historian of the Mississippi region. It is not clear when he began collecting, but he was certainly active in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1859, as founder and president of the Historical Society of Mississippi, he continued his collecting activities on behalf of the society. When this organization failed, he continued collecting privately.⁸⁰

Wailes traveled throughout Mississippi and surrounding states in search for historical treasure. Like Shane and other collectors, he patiently and assiduously looked for records. In Louisiana, on one of his jaunts, he located and recovered the papers of Peter Bryan Bruin, one of the first judges of the Mississippi Territory.⁸¹ Of special interest to Wailes were the papers of former governors and public officials of Mississippi, and he systematically contacted them and their heirs. These efforts were met with

success, for he acquired the executive correspondences of several governors, including Sargent, Claiborne, Williams, and Halver, for the territorial period, 1798 to 1817. With obvious satisfaction, Wailes observed that these papers "contain a perfect treasure of early history and it fills one with terror to reflect upon the almost utter obliteration of our annals which the loss or destruction of these would occasion."⁸²

Other Wailes collections included the papers of Levi Wailes, his father, relating to the Choctaw Boundary of 1809; a manuscript plan of Fort Mims; the original constitution of the Mississippi Republican party; the original journal of the House of Representatives of the Mississippi Territory for November-December 1809; and letters of Thomas Jefferson, Albert Gallatin, Timothy Pickering, and Joseph Meigs. He also interviewed Mississippi pioneers and recorded their accounts about early settlements.⁸³ Wailes traveled to other libraries and archives in the east to find out what sources they might have on Mississippi. In the summer of 1859, he was in New York City where he visited the Astor Library and the New-York Historical Society, and later, in Philadelphia, the library of the American Philosophical Society and the Franklin Library. Washington, D.C., was on his itinerary next; there he visited Peter Force and Joseph Kennedy, head of the U.S. Census Bureau.⁸⁴

Wailes established a fine reputation as a scholar as well as a collector. In 1854 he published a *Report on the Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi*, the first 116 pages of which were devoted to a history of Mississippi up to 1798.⁸⁵ In 1862 he completed his memoir of Leonard Covington. Wailes also completed accounts of the life of Governor Winthrop Sargent and a history of Jefferson College.⁸⁶

In his presidential address to the Mississippi Historical Society in 1858, Benjamin Wailes summed up his collecting activities:

Some historical curiosities have been rescued from obscure, hidden or forgotten recesses, others have been traced and manuscript journals and memoranda of early and interesting events in our history have been ascertained to exist, with some assurance of eventual recovery.⁸⁷

Following his death in Natchez in 1862, the collections brought together by Benjamin L. C. Wailes, as well as his own diaries and other family papers, were placed in the Mississippi State Library, and are now in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. They have been used constantly by scholars.

Two private collectors active in the over-mountain area deserve special attention because of the size and importance of their holdings and the methods they used to collect the materials—Henry Schoolcraft of

Michigan and Lyman Draper of Wisconsin. In a period when few citizens recognized the value of historical records and the need to preserve them, these two pioneer collectors brought together extensive historical materials which were later placed in major research institutions.

The motives of these two collectors differed. Henry Schoolcraft's primary interest was the Indians of North America, especially in the upper Great Lakes area. He recognized that, as the tribes were passing from the scene and being removed to the Indian country west of the Mississippi River, their culture and traditions were being lost. He set out to collect and preserve historical information about the Indians before it was destroyed. Schoolcraft not only amassed a huge collection, but he also published widely. On the other hand, Lyman Draper was fascinated by the western frontier and the early settlement of the Ohio Valley area, especially Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. Indian fighters and military leaders were his primary interests along with the founders of frontier villages. Draper intended to use the material he collected to write biographical accounts of George Rogers Clark, Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, and other frontier men, but he published little. He was too busy collecting. Draper's work had a profound impact upon American historiography, for his vast collection, given to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, was a major influence in the work of Frederick Jackson Turner on the American frontier.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was born in March 1793 in Guilderland, New York, a small village west of Albany. His family had taken part in the American Revolution and as a child he listened avidly to accounts of battles and the "bloodthirsty Indian" who attacked the frontier settlements in upstate New York and captured women and young children. As early as age ten he read accounts of "narratives of captivity and hair breadth escapes of men and women from their clutches. . . ." ⁸⁸

In 1820, Schoolcraft got a chance to view firsthand Indian tribes living on the northern frontier when he was invited by Secretary of War John Calhoun to accompany Governor Lewis Cass as geologist on an expedition into the Lake Superior-Minnesota country. The purpose of the trip was to explore the natural resources of the region and to determine the condition and loyalty of the Chippewa tribe. This expedition was the turning point in Schoolcraft's life. He began a lifelong friendship with Lewis Cass, and his account of the trip, *Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Region of the United States . . . in the Year 1820*, established him as a writer of the frontier. ⁸⁹

In 1822 Calhoun appointed Schoolcraft Indian agent for the Upper Lakes, with headquarters at Sault Ste. Marie, a frontier village on the St.

Mary's River, connecting Lake Huron and Lake Superior. His duties included monitoring the fur trade, negotiating treaties, receiving Indian visitors at the agency headquarters, and visiting the tribal villages within his jurisdiction, which included northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The recent war with Canada had created concern in Washington about the loyalty of the Indian tribes on the northern border in the event of further warfare.

Shortly after his arrival at Sault Ste. Marie, Schoolcraft received a request from Lewis Cass, governor of the Michigan Territory and superintendent of Indian affairs, to conduct a detailed inquiry into the life, customs, and beliefs of the Indian. Cass was fully aware of the their plight and that "the time for collecting materials to illustrate the past and present condition of the Indians is rapidly passing away."⁹⁰

Schoolcraft received the request warmly. He had long been interested in the Indians, and the Cass inquiry gave a structure for research and a sense of urgency to complete the work. Furthermore, he needed some project to occupy his time during the long winter months when the Lake Superior region was isolated from Detroit and other settlements, except for sporadic mail deliveries. He had "early developed distaste for the ordinary modes of killing time," so he devoted himself to the study of Indian life and customs. "Every winter," he recorded in his journal in 1826, "beginning as soon as the navigation closes and the world is fairly shut out, has thus constituted a season of studies. My attention has been perpetually divided between books and living interpreters."⁹¹

The ability of Schoolcraft to gather information on the Indians of the area was enhanced greatly in 1824 when he married Jane Johnston, the daughter of a prominent fur trader and a full-blooded Chippewa mother, whose relatives held influential positions in the Chippewa villages along Lake Superior.

His first task was to study Indian languages and then concentrate upon Indian culture, religion, music, superstitions, hunting and fishing, agriculture, dress, village life, tribal government, and warfare. To assist in gathering the information mainly by structured interviews with Indian leaders, he hired the best interpreters available and paid them "premium wages." He also received assistance from his wife's family—her parents, four brothers, and three sisters—all of whom were trusted by Chippewas leaders of the area. Schoolcraft's diary entry of 30 May 1824, addressed the importance of the Johnston family:

Being connected by marriage with an educated and intelligent lady, who is descended by her mother's side from the former ruler of the Chippewa nation—a man of renown—I was received on this trip, with a degree of

confidence and cordiality by the Indians . . . and the incidents of the trip revealed to me some of the most interesting scenes of Indian domestic life."⁹²

The Indian agent had several opportunities to negotiate treaties with the Chippewa, Ottawa, and other major tribes of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Since these treaty sessions involved the assembling of all principal chiefs and other Indian leaders, most of whom were elderly, it gave Schoolcraft an unusual opportunity to interview them and gather firsthand information about their life and customs. During treaty negotiations at Prairie du Chein, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1825, he interviewed many of the Indian leaders and filled a journal with information he gathered, especially about "their villages, dress and manners." At the Treaty of Butte des Mortes in Wisconsin two years later, Schoolcraft filled a journal with accounts of his interviews with the Stockbridge band who had been relocated there from Massachusetts. Accounts of their history and language and their relations with the Chippewa tribes of Wisconsin filled many pages. Also during the twenty years as agent Schoolcraft visited all of the major tribal villages within his jurisdiction. Included were the remote and isolated villages in northern Minnesota, where he found the Indians much more independent and hostile.⁹³ The summer months were always the busiest at the agency headquarters at Sault Ste. Marie and, after 1833, Mackinac Island. Hundreds of Indian chiefs arrived by canoe from all parts of the territory to discuss their problems and needs with the agent and especially to collect presents. These visits gave Schoolcraft an unusual opportunity to conduct lengthy interviews.

Schoolcraft was not content just to collect data for Lewis Cass and other government officials or the scholars and writers who contacted him for information about Indians. He published a number of articles and books about his research on the Chippewa. In 1825, he published a newspaper at the Sault—*The Literary Voyageur*—in which he recorded accounts of Indian legends. The story of his famous expedition in 1832 to Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi, was published in 1834.⁹⁴ His two-volume work, *Algic Researches*, published in 1839 and which contained detailed accounts of Indian legends, won him international attention. The volumes were later used by Henry Longfellow and served as the basis of his *Tales of Hiawatha*.⁹⁵

Within the next two decades Schoolcraft published a number of books based upon his research on the Chippewa, Iroquois, and other tribes. His six-volume *Historical and Statistical Information, Respecting the History, Condition and the Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1851-56) was widely accepted at the time as one of the major studies of the Indians

of North America.⁹⁶ His *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontier* (1851) was also widely received and is still one of the best firsthand accounts of life in the Lake Superior region.

Henry Schoolcraft was involved with many other programs and activities to promote a study of history. He was one of the founders of the Historical Society of Michigan in 1828 and later served as its president. He was a member of numerous other historical organizations and as honorary member of some of the most prestigious international and national scholarly and scientific organizations. He gave the historical societies and museums many valuable items relating to Indian life.

As a member of the Territorial Legislature of Michigan, Schoolcraft became the spokesperson in promoting the history of the region. In 1836 he encouraged Lewis Cass, then ambassador to France, to copy records in the French National Archives in Paris relating to the French settlement of the Great Lakes. Schoolcraft also introduced legislation encouraging the use of Indian names for counties, townships, lakes, rivers, and other geographical features of the state. Thus, Michigan is rich with such Indian names as Alpena, Algonac, Leelanau, Oscoda, Manistique, and Tuscola. The agent also recommended the naming of Michigan counties and townships for soldiers who served valiantly for General Anthony Wayne in the western military campaign in the 1790s.⁹⁷ After his death in 1864, Schoolcraft's widow presented his voluminous collection of manuscripts, publications, Indian artifacts, and memorabilia to the Smithsonian Institution. It was later transferred in several installments to the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress where it has been used constantly by scholars.

Henry Schoolcraft—Indian agent, historian, and ethnologist—made a major contribution to historical scholarship with his writings and his collections on the Indians of North America. His work was unique also because, during the period before 1861 in the trans-mountain states, most historical societies, collectors, and writers were primarily interested in the frontier and the settlers and their leaders who replaced the Indians.

Lyman Draper, one of the premier manuscript collectors in the nineteenth century, will be given attention later by Leslie Fishel in reference to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and to what he accomplished as executive secretary of that organization. But he deserves attention also for his contributions in the trans-mountain states as well. He not only collected and preserved important historical documents from the area, which might otherwise have been lost, but he also interviewed hundreds of early pioneers and their families whose accounts would

certainly have been lost without his efforts. He raised the consciousness of the citizens of Tennessee, Ohio, and Kentucky to the need to preserve the history of their respective states. Lyman Draper accomplished more in these three states prior to 1861 than did the organized efforts of all of the state historical societies.⁹⁸

Lyman Copeland Draper was born in western New York state in 1815 and, like Henry Schoolcraft, was exposed to the firsthand accounts and tales of the veterans of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. He became a keen student of history and, after two years at Granville (now Denison) College, Ohio, in 1834-36, Draper turned his attention to the settlement and early history of the American frontier and to the Indian and border wars in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. Unlike other historians of the period, who were interested in the statesmen and prominent national figures, Draper took a special interest in the ordinary families who settled the frontier and in their military leaders.

General George Rogers Clark became his hero and, from the early 1840s, Draper traveled through the Ohio Valley to collect records relating to General Clark and especially his march on Vincennes in 1779. He interviewed Clark's friends, relatives, and military colleagues. Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, James Herrod, William Preston, Colonel Richard Johnson, and the Campbells also captured his interest, and their papers and memoirs were given high priority. Draper soon realized that few of the historical records of these famous pioneers had been collected and preserved in libraries or by historical societies and that many of the men were aged and in ill health. Indeed, many had already died.

Draper's collecting interest extended to other states as well. Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania were visited by Draper. He lived in Mobile, Alabama, and Pontotoc, Mississippi, for a few years and while there he contacted early pioneers, trying to acquire their papers. He planned from the beginning to write a number of books about the frontier and the settlers who opened up the land, including biographies of George Rogers Clark, Daniel Boone, and other Ohio Valley pioneers. In fact, in contacting early pioneers he requested loan or gift of their personal family papers for use in the preparation of the books.⁹⁹

Draper was a very successful collector. He had a single-minded goal to build up a major historical collection; he was folksy and articulate, and obviously very persuasive. He was described as a "quiet, scholarly unpretentious and loveable man" and was welcomed into the homes of settlers.¹⁰⁰ Hosts were excited about his announced plans for a history of their community and an account of the role of their families in the early settlement of the frontier, and "they assisted him in every way and turned

over to him from their old chests and 'secretaries' with their most precious historical heirlooms."¹⁰¹

Draper also used interviews—or "oral history" as we understand the technique today—to supplement the documents and manuscripts he collected. For his planned biography of George Rogers Clark he interviewed fifteen of General Clark's old Indian campaigners, and many of the family and associates of early pioneers—Boone, Kenton, Sevier, Robertson, Pickens, Crawford, Shelby, Brady, Cleveland, and the Witzels.¹⁰² The aging Indian survivors of the early battles and skirmishes were also interviewed. On one occasion, in 1844, Draper visited Andrew Jackson at the Hermitage and had a long conversation about the battle of New Orleans.¹⁰³

In 1863 at the height of the Civil War, Draper took a four-month "collecting expedition" to Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, western Pennsylvania, Canada, and Michigan. Because of wartime disruptions, he traveled on foot 730 miles. He did not complain of the hardships encountered. In Kentucky alone he collected 700-800 pages of notes and other historical manuscripts relating to Boone, Kenton, Brady, and Clark.¹⁰⁴

Although Draper moved to Madison, Wisconsin, in 1852 to take charge of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, he continued his collecting activities in the over-mountain states. He continued to journey south to meet early settlers and their families; he wrote hundreds of letters to pioneers seeking their family papers and information about specific events. He also purchased books and manuscript collections when he could not acquire them as gifts. In 1856 he paid \$100 for the Brady manuscripts, and in 1864, \$255 for the Drake Collection. The collection of the Reverend John Dabney Shane of Kentucky cost Draper \$257. These expenditures were minor compared to the expenses of his frequent trips to the south.¹⁰⁵

Draper's plans to write a history of the settlement of Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Ohio Valley and of the pioneers who first settled and fought for the area never materialized. According to Reuben Gold Thwaites, Draper's successor as director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, "If the truth must be told, our collector had already become so involved with the zeal of collecting that he had come to look upon the digestion of his material as of secondary consideration."¹⁰⁶ Draper himself was very much aware of his failure to publish the numerous planned historical studies and biographies. "I have wasted my time in puttering," he wrote, "but I see no help for it; I can write nothing so long as I fear there is a fact, no matter how small, yet ungarnered."¹⁰⁷

It is, of course, regrettable that Draper was not able to write about the frontier in American history. For fifty years he was in constant contact with the early pioneers and their frontier. He collected their papers and manuscripts and he recorded their reminiscences. He gained a unique insight into the men and women of the Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio region. But he should be judged not for his failure to write the definitive history of the frontier but for the magnificent collection which he brought together. In 1857 Draper estimated that his collection consisted of "some 10,000 foolscap pages" of the recollections of warriors and pioneers, either written by themselves "or taken down from their own lips," and an additional 5,000 "original manuscript journals, memorandum books, and old letters written by nearly all the leading border heroes of the west."¹⁰⁸ By 1887 when he retired from the Historical Society after "forty years of labors and 60,000 miles of journeyings," it had grown significantly. His personal collections then consisted of 486 volumes of manuscripts arranged around an individual, a subject, or a geographical area about which Draper planned to write.¹⁰⁹

Draper's collecting activities in Tennessee, Kentucky, and other frontier states were surrounded by controversy during his lifetime and after his death in 1891. Many families in those areas, who had loaned their family collections to Draper for use in a book about the area, angrily requested the return of their manuscripts. Draper returned some collections, but others he retained. He also collected public records of Tennessee and Kentucky, and that has been a very sensitive issue since. In 1919 the state of Tennessee attempted unsuccessfully to replenish the Tennessee public records in the Draper collection. There is still strong sentiment on this issue in Tennessee.¹¹⁰ But despite the controversy, Draper successfully collected and preserved priceless and irreplaceable historical records relating to the trans-mountain states, many of which might have been lost or destroyed if he had not collected them when he did.

Historical Publications

The trans-mountain states prior to 1861 produced a number of historical writers but not of the caliber of those of New England and the eastern states, which witnessed the works of George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, Jared Sparks, Richard Hildreth, John Motley, William H. Prescott, Peter Force, and William Buell Sprague. Furthermore, in contrast to the national and international scope of the eastern writers, the authors in the over-mountain area were interested in the history of a region, a state, or a single community. The frontier, the early pioneers who crossed the

Alleghenies and other mountain barriers to tame the wilderness, the Indian fighters, and even the "aborigines" captured the attention of these writers. In addition to historical narratives, writers concentrated on the geography and geology of their state or region. Travel narratives and gazetteers were popular and appeared in many states prior to 1861.

None of the writers of the region were professional historians, nor did they hold full-time positions with universities. They were usually full-time lawyers, jurists, planters, teachers, physicians, legislators, or journalists, for whom history was a hobby. The Indian agent, Henry Schoolcraft, was trained in geology and natural sciences but became fascinated with the Indians and their culture.

Despite the differences, the historians of the eastern seaboard and the trans-mountain west shared one major problem which compromised their work—the paucity of readily available reference materials. There was no national or state archives responsible for the preservation of public records, and even when public records existed, access to them was usually limited to designated public officials. The only reliable source was the libraries of local historical societies, which were often developed in response to the specific needs and interests of local historians and writers, and the private libraries of collectors. By 1860 a number of such individuals had amassed large collections of historical manuscripts which they shared with historians and writers.

The costs and other burdens of publishing was another common problem of eastern and trans-mountain writers prior to 1861. Most authors had to assume all aspects of the publishing process, including selection of paper and type, design, proofreading, and sales. All of the costs of printing, illustrations, and binding were borne by the author.¹¹¹

One of the first writers in the west was John Filson, and his works set a pattern for local history. In 1774, after he had purchased large tracts of land in Kentucky and in order to "attract settlers to the dark and bloody ground," he published *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucky*.¹¹² His account of Daniel Boone as the pioneer settler and Indian fighter captured the popular imagination and helped develop the first western hero. The book was translated and published in French and German, and it created the "model of the American frontiersman." Filson planned to write another volume on the Illinois country, but he disappeared 1 October 1778, near Cincinnati—possibly a victim of hostile Indians. The famous Filson Club of Kentucky, founded in 1884, was named in his honor.

Later other Kentucky historians like Humphrey Marshall, H. McMurtrie, Benjamin Cassidy, and Mann Butler, author of *A History of the*

Commonwealth of Kentucky (1834), continued the tradition set by John Filson.¹¹³

John W. Monette, an Alabama physician, wrote *History and Discovery and Settlement of the Valley of the Mississippi*,¹¹⁴ and Albert James Pickett wrote *A History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period*.¹¹⁵ Both authors commented upon the difficulty in locating original sources for the preparation of their books.

Judge John Haywood, a founder of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society, authored two early studies: *The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee Up to the Year 1796* (1823)¹¹⁶ and *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee Up to the First Settlement by the White People in 1768*.¹¹⁷

The works of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft about the frontier and the native American Indians have already been cited. They helped gain him an international reputation for his studies of the Indian and still remain valuable historical and ethnographic studies of the Indians of North America.

Another major study which included sections on the trans-mountain states was Timothy Flint's *Condensed Geography and History of the Western States*.¹¹⁸ Flint, a Presbyterian minister was also the editor of the *Western Monthly Review*, and in this capacity he published some excellent regional and local history articles. The *Southern Literary Messenger*, which began publication in the 1830s, emphasized the contributions of the south to American history.

Historical societies also were involved in the sponsorship and publishing of regional and local history. They often published the major addresses presented at annual meetings as separate booklets or pamphlets—or they waited a few years to publish several addresses in a their publication of *Transactions* or *Proceedings*.

Many historical societies in the trans-mountain states joined their eastern counterparts in publishing documents in European archives which related to the discovery, exploration, and settlement of their state or region.

Conclusion

The rise of a historical consciousness proceeded at a different pace in the eight states of the trans-mountain west as compared to their eastern neighbors. Historical societies were formed by settlers migrating from the eastern seaboard who were concerned not so much with the story of the American Revolution and its founding patriot leaders as with the exciting account of the settlement of the American frontier and the explorers and

Indian fighters who secured a title to the western lands. Given the limited population of these over-mountain states and the lack of urban centers, it is not surprising that historical societies floundered prior to 1861. Nor is it surprising that the area produced few historians of national and international stature. Yet these historical organizations and regional historians left their mark and laid the groundwork for the major historical organizations founded in the last half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the major lasting contribution to the promotion of a historical consciousness in the years prior to 1861 was made by private collectors. Led by Lyman Draper, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Israel Tefft, Charles Whittlesey, Benjamin Wailes, James Delaney Shane, and Reuben Durrett, these enterprising collectors preserved priceless and irreplaceable historical documents, oral histories, and other materials which would undoubtedly have been lost without their efforts. These collections, which became the core of many of our research libraries, including the Library of Congress, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and other distinguished research libraries and archives, have been used extensively by several generations of scholars.

ENDNOTES

1. I wish to thank the following for assistance in this article, especially for providing information about the founding of state and regional historical societies in their states: Edwin C. Bridges, Alabama Department of Archives and History; John Daly, Illinois State Archives; Gerald Hanfield, Jr., Indiana Commission on Public Records; Melba Porter Hay, Kentucky Historical Society; Mark V. Wetherington, The Filson Club; Kermit J. Pike, Western Reserve Historical Society; Ann Toplovich, Tennessee Historical Society; and John Dann, The William Clements Library, University of Michigan.
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Wisconsin

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The seed of a state historical society was planted before Wisconsin Territory became a state.¹ Acting on a suggestion by Richard H. Magoon of Lafayette County, the editor of the Mineral Point *Democrat*, Chauncey C. Britt, published the idea in the fall of 1845, calling it "most laudable, and feasible." Eleven months later, Britt had moved to Milwaukee to edit a paper there. Referring to himself anonymously, he slyly noted that "one of our editorial brethren" in the western part of the state had previously urged the establishment of a historical organization. He expressed disappointment that no one had heeded the western editor and suggested that as delegates met in Madison to draw up a state constitution, some of them could easily meet to form a historical society. "What say you, brethren of the press—aye or nay?"

Several newspapers responded favorably, and when the constitutional convention met in Madison in October 1846, a handful of delegates gathered several times, according to recollections, and established the framework of a historical society, with officers and an agreement to hear an address at the first annual meeting in January 1847. When the speaker reneged, the members' dutiful election of officers failed to sustain the infant body and it became a real but faint memory.²

Wisconsin was admitted to the Union in 1848, and Governor Nelson Dewey's first address to the legislature reminded that body of its obligation to introduce and implement "such measures as will tend to

elevate the people in the scale of moral excellence and intellectual improvement." A slim reed, perhaps, on which to build an enduring historical society, yet it reflected the thinking of leading men in the young state.³

The opinions of the state's prominent men were formative because they were the society's founders. When the society was reorganized in January 1849, Eleazar Root, the superintendent of public instruction, was credited with the "efficient movement" to accomplish that end, and Governor Dewey was elected president. Among the 117 persons who signed up as supporters were politicians, newspaper editors, educators, ministers, and real estate promoters from 34 counties. The support of these men from a healthy geographical cross-section of the state, coupled with the governor's earlier precept and continuing participation, augured a bright future for the society.⁴

During the four years between 1849 and 1853, the society met annually in the Capitol to hear an address, the governor presiding with the supreme court justices and the university regents often in attendance. But there was little flesh on the skeleton, which remained practically immobile. Early collecting efforts, the work more of interested individuals than of organizational initiative, included a successful appeal for Wisconsin newspaper files; the gathering of data on Native American mounds, earthworks, and place names; two manuscript collections from a distinguished early settler Cyrus Woodman; and an appeal to Wisconsin emigrants to California to deposit journals, letters, and physical objects with the society.⁵

The addresses before the society were printed and used as exchanges to begin the society's library, developing a collection of 50 volumes by 1853, "these books being state laws, legislative journals, miscellaneous public documents," a bibliography, and two publications of the American Ethnographical Society. The pace of progress was slow and the state's leaders, busy with their own projects, needed an initiator, an instigator, a person with vision and vitality, a man, in a later director's words, "full of vigor and push." The scene was set for Lyman Copeland Draper.⁶

His biographer, the late William B. Hesseltine, has described Draper's early days and his move to Wisconsin. His interest in the state was excited by Charles Larrabee, a college friend and Wisconsin politician, who dangled a state librarianship in front of him. "Madison," Larrabee added in a 21 June 1852, letter, "is the prettiest spot in the West—proverbially healthy." During the summer of 1852, a chorus of letters from Madisonians expanded on this theme, with Beriah Brown, editor of the *Madison Democrat*, expressing his joy in early September "that you have

concluded to make your future home in Wisconsin." Draper was in Madison by mid-October but the promised job never developed. The State Library's loss was the State Historical Society's gain.⁷

Before he came west, Draper had established himself as a wide-ranging, ambitious collector. For close to a decade he had "devoted himself almost exclusively to gathering materials, printed and manuscript, on the history of the American West from 1763 to the close of the War of 1812." He knew the dealers and other collectors; his horizon embraced Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Europe. At the time of his move, his library of books and pamphlets numbered in the thousands.⁸ When his alma mater, Granville College (now Denison University) in Ohio, gave him an honorary master of arts degree, a trustee of that institution inquired who Draper was, and his mentor quickly replied "the Plutarch of Western History."⁹

Within three months of his arrival in Madison, the 37-year-old Draper was elected a member of the Historical Society; at the same 19 January 1853 meeting he was elected to the governing executive committee. His coming was not greeted with unreserved acclamation; "I think," the Rev. Charles Lord, minister of the Congregational Church, observed two weeks before the meeting, "that Mr. Draper, who is engaged in historical researches, and expects, I believe, to be a resident of Wisconsin, and I suppose of Madison, will be of service to us in our Society." His lack of enthusiasm may have stemmed from his theological doubts about a Baptist who was a historian. The same meeting raised annual dues to one dollar and authorized the executive committee to use "surplus funds in the Treasury for the purchase of rare works illustrative of the history of Wisconsin or of the West in general." This pointed the way for a collecting policy which became as broad as the continent and as wide as the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁰

From the beginning, Draper was in the middle of the society's activity. The first step was to stabilize the young organization by tying it to the state. Encouraged by society activists, the legislature enacted a charter and the society, after a divisive discussion, tried to adopt a constitution. The debate degenerated into wrangling between two groups, one opting for a more elite, aristocratic organization, modeled after the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the other a more democratically constituted structure, the direction that Draper wanted to go. He was reassured by the society's president, General William R. Smith, who dismissed the elitists' proposal as "the surreptitious Historical Society" and their threats to consult an attorney as "childs play." "Let the boys alone," he advised, promising when he returned to Madison to "*purge* us of those

who now *disgrace* us." The promise was not easily redeemed, requiring the rest of the year before a revised constitution, embracing Draper's point of view, was adopted and the young society, finally, set on its proper course.¹¹

The new constitution focused collecting policies on Wisconsin, permitted honorary and corresponding members, established the duties of the officers, including a librarian, and placed the burden of running the society on the corresponding secretary. To that post the executive committee on 18 January 1854 elected Draper, after approving the constitution. In a way, his election merely ratified work that he had already begun. As early as May 1853, Draper received a letter of thanks for the corresponding membership from the editor of the Kenosha [WI] *Democrat*, along with a promise to send the paper to the society "so long as I conduct it" and an invitation to "command me in anything wherein I can serve your objects hereafter." During the rest of that year, while the constitutional squabble continued, Draper recognized others in the name of the society; letters came in from Wisconsin residents offering newspapers and the "likeness" which Draper had requested. Before the crucial 18 January meeting, William H. Prescott sent copies of two of his books from Boston; Francis Parkman accepted an honorary membership ("I shall value the honor"), promising a copy of a manuscript journal; J. H. Trumbull of Hartford, Connecticut, and Albert Ellis of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, responded favorably to Draper's solicitations.¹²

The January meeting was continued six days later and a committee was appointed to seek an appropriation from the legislature. Draper took the lead, a local editor and Judge Larrabee followed, and a friendly assemblyman, Harlow Orton, introduced the measure. It sailed through both houses in twenty days, appropriating \$500 to the society for purchase of rare books, manuscripts, and other historical material. By the 18 February meeting, the executive committee was able to instruct its treasurer to take care of the appropriation and Draper received authorization to bid for some books at a New York auction. The society, united after a year of wrangling, energized by Draper, and funded by a legislative appropriation, was on its way.¹³

By the time Draper received the title of corresponding secretary, he had already stamped his pattern on the office. The first obligation was to collect research material as intensively and extensively as possible. Not bound by the constitutional fiat to focus on Wisconsin, Draper sought books, newspapers, journals, government documents, letters, diaries, and relics wherever they were found. He sought likenesses in oil, daguerreotype, or photograph from a more select audience, but these, too, were not circumscribed by geography.¹⁴

To accomplish these purposes, Draper used several techniques. Foremost was his ingratiating manner; where he wrote personal letters, he flattered without fawning, praised without posturing. "Anxious to acknowledge the indebtedness of our country to the skill and genius of artists in placing permanently upon canvas the historic men and events of the age," he wrote to an anonymous artist, "the Wisconsin Historical Society has chosen you, as one of that meritorious profession, an *Honorary Member*."¹⁵

Drawing on his knowledge of interested people, soliciting names and addresses from others, and encouraging magazine and newspaper stories about the society, he developed a growing mailing list of possible friends of the society. Men who had agreed to be society agents—that is, serve as collectors and collecting locations for donated materials—were especially helpful. C. R. Starkweather, the society agent in Chicago, urged that Draper ask W. B. Ogden, "someone who is in a more prominent position," to help. Draper did and Ogden was helpful. Samuel Drake, the society agent in Boston, sent in the names of the corresponding secretaries of several New England historical societies and the whereabouts of James Freeman Clarke, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society. The man whom Draper believed held that position had been "dead many years," Drake wrote, adding in a second letter that his efforts at soliciting "a few friends to contribute something for your Society" were unproductive. The Buffalo agent responded with news of two men, one dead, one anxious to become a society member. A Massachusetts resident declined to accept a society membership but suggested two other, well-placed names. A Wisconsin editor advised Draper that a young man about to emigrate to Kansas had "newspaper files to sell," but could not afford to give them away. Draper's initiatives, brash but respectful, touched many individuals to enlarge the society's embrace.¹⁶

A certificate of membership, either honorary or corresponding, written and signed by Draper, went to all prospective candidates. It stated that these membership categories were "exempt from fee or taxation." A printed description attached to the certificate, with the subscribed names of the executive committee, made clear its purposes, explaining that the society, under its legislative charter of March 1853, "bids fair to accomplish much in the field of Western Historical research and collection." Like the constitution which emerged from it, the legislative charter actually said nothing about "Western Historical research," restricting itself to materials "illustrative of the history of the State." Draper's elastic interpretation of both documents was one springboard from which the society's comprehensive collecting practices grew.

Giving prominent mention to the legislative grant of \$500 for collecting and disseminating historical information, Draper quoted Lewis Cass on the state's "rapid and wonderful" growth, inflating that phrase with his own words into "altogether unprecedented marvelous growth." Since Wisconsin had no public library dedicated to "the history and progress of the Northwest," Draper laid out for the society's newly-honored members ("our fellow citizens of Wisconsin, and literary friends abroad") the types of materials which were needed.

He listed nine categories, including manuscripts, newspaper files, drawings of mounds and fortifications, information about "ancient coins, or other curiosities," Indian names, "Books of all kinds, and especially such as relate to American history, travels and biography in general, and the West in particular," maps, magazines, autographs, statuary, engravings, coins, medals and portraits. He asked other historical societies for their publications, authors for signed complimentary copies of their books, and newspaper editors for free subscriptions to their papers.

The certificates' narrative concluded with a promise to send donors all society publications "which will ere long be commenced and regularly continued" and listed the society's agents in major cities from St. Louis to the East coast, who had agreed to accept donations and forward them to the society. The list was impressive: Samuel Drake in Boston, Joel Munsell in Albany, Charles B. Norton in New York, C. R. Starkweather in Chicago, and Increase A. Lapham in Milwaukee, to name five of the nine. This network of "depots" for the society was probably the first of its kind in the country.¹⁷

Samuel Drake, "one of America's finest antiquarians and one of the prickliest men of his time," was a founder of and major influence on the first genealogical journal in the world, and a recognized scholar, though he was never invited to join the prestigious Massachusetts Historical Society. Joel Munsell was acknowledged to be the dean of publishers of antiquarian books, who, in late 1861, became publisher of Drake's journal, *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*. Charles Norton was a well-known book-seller whose travels took him to Europe periodically in search of rare books and manuscripts. In the early years, he worked closely with Draper representing the society at auctions and securing rare materials for sale to the society. C. R. Starkweather was active in behalf of the society, sending from Chicago in December 1854 a miscellany from several donors, including himself. The variety stretched from Gray's *Botanical Textbook* and *Poets and Poetry of Europe* to a history of insurrections in China and an Illinois gazetteer.¹⁸

Increase Lapham of Milwaukee was a scientist of growing reputation,

"a naturalist of first rank," who was an officer and strong supporter of the Society. He took a wide-ranging view of the society's mission, urging Draper to consolidate all libraries into one comprehensive state library, soliciting materials, and lending his name to legislative petitions. Like the others, Lapham occasionally forwarded some donations of his own to the society.¹⁹

The idea of membership categories, about which some had been dubious, worked well. In March 1854, hearty acceptances came from such luminaries as Samuel F. B. Morse, Benjamin Silliman, Jr., Roger B. Taney, William Cullen Bryant, Oliver W. Holmes, the Merriam brothers, Horace Mann, Henry B. Carey, Edward Bates, Joseph Henry, and John G. Palfrey. All regions of the nation were represented, primarily north of the Mason-Dixon line and east of the Mississippi, with a scattering from southern cities like New Orleans and Charleston. Francis Lieber and William Gilmore Simms were among those from the south. Only two refusals appeared up to March 24, including that of William B. Astor, whose library became a major component of the New York [City] Public Library.²⁰

The Draper approach to collecting did not stop with flattering letters and free memberships. Expanding the society's meager exchange policy, begun in 1852 with annual addresses, he milked the exchange process with an aggressively skilled hand. Before the society was able to publish its first volume of collections, Draper was exporting state documents which the legislature had authorized be printed in quantities for that purpose. The executive committee determined in April 1854 that these should go first to those historical and learned societies which "regularly" provide copies of their publications to the society.²¹

The previous month Draper had received a formal reply to his request for exchanges from the Massachusetts Historical Society, coolly advising him that complete sets of their collections were in short supply but saying that it would place his letter before the next society meeting. The reply was signed by John Langdon Sibley as chairman of a committee which included Jared Sparks and the Reverend George E. Ellis. Enclosed was a confidential letter from Sibley, then assistant librarian at Harvard, reporting that his (Sibley's) request "some six or eight years ago" to the Wisconsin legislature for copies of their published documents was greeted, he had heard, with "ridicule." He had understood further that the newspapers had "made it a subject for great merriment and sarcasm." He said he had told no one of this and insisted that Draper not mention this to the legislature or in any letter to Sibley or Harvard.

In his reply to Sibley, Draper must have been in top form, because two months later, Sibley wrote in a different tone. He was going to

deposit with the society's Boston agent, Samuel Drake, a full set of college catalogues, copies of 20 annual reports, 13 pamphlets relating to Harvard, a complete set of the college library catalogue, and miscellaneous volumes. He encouraged Draper to publish extracts from Jesuit Relations and gave him an open invitation "to consult at any time any works we have which can be of value to you." He concluded by advising Draper to communicate with the Massachusetts Historical Society librarian, Joseph B. Felt, about a set of that society's collections, adding that if Draper applies, "there is no doubt but you will have the series." Early on, Draper demonstrated that his skillful persuasive powers would be of substantial value to the young society's collecting efforts.²²

Replies from some historical and learned organizations were equally encouraging. Although the American Philosophical Society would not send Wisconsin a Franklin autograph, the society's secretary, Charles B. Trego, was open to an exchange relationship. Joseph Henry committed the Smithsonian Institution to exchanges with the society, pointing out that its system "is merely an extension of that which has been in operation for more than a quarter of a century by the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy [of] Boston." The New-York Historical Society made Draper a corresponding member and sent some publications to initiate the exchange the following year. The Chicago Historical Society was a going concern, its secretary, William Barry, asserted, acknowledging the receipt of a copy of the Wisconsin Society's *Collections*. "This first act of friendly courtesy," Barry added, was appreciated by his society members. Promising reciprocity in exchanges, Barry flattered Draper by saying his society hoped "to emulate and second the enlightened and patriotic sentiments" of the Wisconsin society. Six months later, on the receipt of a package from Draper, Barry congratulated him on setting a successful example for historical societies and suggested a visit and personal conversation which "might result in arrangements to the mutual advantage of the two institutions."²³

The Illinois, New Jersey, and Minnesota historical societies were healthy, their officers reported, and would be glad to exchange with Wisconsin. The Illinois corresponding secretary boasted about its "considerable library" while the New Jersey librarian cautiously claimed that its rooms, "if not absolutely fireproof[,] are so called." Minnesota's society was called "well-organized" with the promise of "much usefulness." The Historical Society of Pennsylvania was equally active and eager to exchange. The Bowdoin College librarian explained how to send materials to the Maine Historical Society, and the Essex Institute secretary made three lists, one of volumes he was transmitting, via the Boston agent, the

second of specific volumes which he wanted from Wisconsin, and a third embracing all types of publications in which the institute was interested. "[B]y a system of exchanges," he concluded, "we may mutually aid the Libraries of the two societies."

Not all the institutions writing to Wisconsin were as active. When Draper sent a parcel of books to the Alabama Historical Society with the suggestion that it seek legislative aid, the corresponding secretary replied with thanks "and such small publications as our Society has been able to make." The advice, he added, "has been thought of," but the state was too poor. The Tennessee Historical Society was going "to press upon our Legislature the duty of an appropriation" and expected space in the State Capitol. The Iowa General Assembly rewarded its newly-formed state historical society with an annual appropriation, thanks, its corresponding secretary claimed, to "no small exertion" on his part. He predicted that the organization would be "underway" shortly. "I have much to learn," he confessed, requesting a copy of the Wisconsin society's by-laws, "and anything you think will aid me."²⁴

The Kansas society, established in 1859 by the territorial legislature, was "making commendable progress," and asked for Wisconsin publications. The Virginia Historical Society appreciated the Wisconsin publications it received but since "we have not been as industrious as yourselves" it could not reciprocate. A member of the South Carolina Historical Society, Albert G. Mackey, a medical doctor, reported that it was still a paper organization less than a year old, but when it matured sufficiently to engage in exchanges, he would try to include Wisconsin.

Several other correspondents echoed Dr. Mackey's evaluation of their states' historical societies. From Terre Haute, Indiana, C. T. Noble lamented that "we have a State Historical Society but no Enthusiasm for its success exists." George Burt in St. Augustine, Florida, remarked on the "astonishing rapidity" which characterized the Wisconsin society's advancement, observing that the Florida organization was "still in its infancy," and had not yet secured legislative support. Two years later he sent Draper the Florida society's organizational documents and expressed interest in beginning a correspondence and in receiving Wisconsin's publications. In Michigan, Alfred Russell wrote, the state society "has just been re-organized upon a new basis, with the prospect of more flattering success." Less than a year later, the librarian wrote asking Draper to forward the society's cataloguing system, since the one he was using was inadequate. The Ohio Historical Society, with an "unfavorable" location in Cincinnati, was described as "little worthy of commendation" in 1854. Maryland's Historical Society was characterized with "indolence" by an out-

of-state visitor, and a United States Army surgeon in Santa Fe, announcing the creation of a Historical Society of New Mexico, asked for "a friendly and mutual interchange of views" with similar groups.²⁵

Draper's campaign to stimulate exchanges for Wisconsin uncovered a *potpourri* of historical societies in various stages of development. The New England and Middle Atlantic institutions were relatively strong and active while the Midwestern and Southern societies, with a few exceptions, languished. Draper's hustle aroused admiration and, undoubtedly, envy in all sections of the country and established Wisconsin as the leader of the collecting movement. The excitement which his vigilance and enthusiasm generated for preserving the raw materials of history was tinged with patriotism and, as a Virginia correspondent commented, "the blush of shame" for what had been lost. "Your Society," Francis Parkman told Draper, "is showing an admirable degree of vitality and in the energy of its action is beyond praise."²⁶

Vitality and energy beyond praise were not confined to the continental limits. Wisconsin and its State Historical Society reached across the Atlantic Ocean almost as if it was not there. While the society was still a paper organization, Governor Nelson Dewey had urged legislative cooperation with Alexandre Vattemare, a citizen of Paris, who had devoted two decades to organizing and implementing an International Literary and Scientific Exchange. Dewey repeated his suggestion two years later, noting that several states had already participated in Vattemare's program and that "benefits of the highest value . . . are resulting from it." In 1854, the legislature authorized 50 copies of the state's publications to be made available annually to the Vattemare project, and Draper hurried to write him the good news. Vattemare's long response outlined his goal: "the realisation of a *universal and true republic of letters* working together under the same peaceful banner of sciences and arts." If nations share the fruits of intellectual and research labors, he argued, national barriers will tumble. International exchange included all kinds of books, but Vattemare tactfully pointed out that legislative reports have "a limited interest" compared with other books. He was confident that "American liberality and national pride" will move Wisconsin and other states to give more than they receive.²⁷

Anxious to give and receive, Draper was somewhat nonplussed by Vattemare's apparent procrastination and his predisposition to lecture Draper on legislative inconstancy and European library customs. A January 1855 letter from Vattemare was primarily devoted to urging a Wisconsin exhibit in the forthcoming Paris Exposition. Draper was surely put more at ease when W. B. Ogden, an influential Chicago railroad magnate just

home from Europe, reported on his long discussion with Vattemare, endorsing the Frenchman's program and productivity and, as proof, citing his gifts to Illinois. Ogden urged Draper to send, with legislative support, copies of statutes, railroad and school reports, "and anything else you may be able to lay your hands on such as specimens of minerals, fossil remains, brick of Aztalan, &c., &c." In return, he assured Draper, Vattemare would send material "worth to you a hundred times what you send." Vattemare worked hard and spent freely out of his own pocket for the project, he testified. Somewhat reassured, Draper hung on and reported that in 1856 he was collecting Wisconsin books to ship to Paris; the next year, acknowledging the legislative grant of \$100 annually for shipping costs, he sent 1,502 books to Paris. Vattemare acknowledged their receipt and announced, Draper reported, "his transmission of the first fruits from his side of the Atlantic which, we hope, may reach our State in safety." In 1858, the society received "the first [and last] fruits" consisting of 231 volumes, 77 pamphlets, and 99 maps, plates, and engravings. Included among the books were "four volumes of the Jesuit Relations—almost priceless in value." The cost to Wisconsin of this drawn-out transaction was \$352.23; the unspent balance (\$47.77) of the legislative grant was transferred to the society's general fund in 1860. The dance with M. Vattemare was over; the music was measured and the memories sweet, but the society was seeking other international partners with whom to harmonize.²⁸

The society's interest in English and European materials grew out of its focus on the new world. "We have purchased in N. Y. over 50 rare vols," Draper exulted to the influential James Duane Doty in March 1854, including a set of "*Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*—partly relating to the Catholic missionaries after 1672." Society honorary or corresponding memberships were spread abroad and the early responses adhered to this new world focus. Nicolaus Trubner, writing from London, promised his bibliographical guide to American literature and "a small collection of Books, relating to America," and Charles B. Norton, the society's purchasing and transshipment agent in New York, promised a London catalogue of valuable books "relating to the early history of this country." Norton was careful to exclude from his recommendations those French books which dealt with South America and Mexico.²⁹

A slight broadening of emphasis began to creep in towards the end of 1856. A Prague resident visiting in Milwaukee wrote to establish an exchange with the Wisconsin society promising in return "a full set of the most valuable scientific works" which the National Museum of Prague had published in the last decade or so. The society's annual report for that year

acknowledged seven volumes and 14 pamphlets from him, though there is no record of their subject. The same year, Cyrus Woodman, temporarily living in Germany, gave the society a two-year subscription to the *London Times*. In 1857, the society recorded purchases of several European periodicals like the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1810-1825; *Parliamentary Register*, 1774-1780; *Annals of Europe*, 1739-1743; and, by donation or exchange, *Record Publications* of Great Britain, in 65 volumes of varying sizes, "relating to early English, Scotch and Irish history statistics, &c.," and 32 volumes of the publications of the Spanish Royal Academy of History. By 1858, Draper was extending society exchanges to European societies and accepting European literature like the Waverly novels and the works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Cobbett. Even as the society's New York agent, visiting Europe, kept looking for European sources of American history, often dismayed by their scarcity and expense, he bought European magazines for Wisconsin. Draper's interest was expansive and inclusive; without protest from the board or members, the western world became the society's oyster.³⁰

Almost from the beginning, the idea of "likenesses" of history's favored men (but not women) ranked high among the society's desires. Draper's letters to men of local, regional, and national prominence rarely omitted a reference to a painting or daguerreotype, procured, of course, at the subject's expense. Artists were entreated to make copies of famous works: Thomas Sully of one of Gilbert Stuart's Washington, or his nephew, Robert M. Sully, of his own portrait of John Marshall. Robert Sully's efforts in behalf of the society produced a drama all of its own, and indicated the importance which Draper, and the society, gave to its "Picture Gallery." For the first time in any historical society, the idea of an artist-in-residence was about to take root in the pioneer West.³¹

Robert Sully responded from Richmond, Virginia, with a warm note of appreciation for Draper's offer of a society membership. He offered to do what he could to help the society and suggested that he would like to visit Madison and meet Draper. A month later in response to Draper's reply asking for information about Sully's Indian portraits, he explained at great length how he was able to paint Black Hawk, his son, and the Prophet. He offered to copy these for \$100, and Draper accepted. By May, Sully was talking about "a quiet residence in a beautiful country," and five months later, his extended letter concluded with a wish for "a quiet log built cottage on the banks of one of your romantic lakes." The correspondence continued into 1855, with Sully writing long and often indecipherable letters. In February 1855, Sully asked, "How is living in Madison—expensive or the reverse?" Two months later, the decision to move made,

he laid out a possible itinerary and laid down a commitment: "I am *determined*, as far as the energy of one can suffice, to make *our* Society *unique*." Draper assured Sully that his Indian pictures were well, even warmly, received; Sully glowed and added that the society's copy of his John Marshall was almost finished. By August, the 52-year-old Sully was ready to leave Richmond for Wisconsin.

He departed in October and got as far as Buffalo. While she thought him still en route, his sister wrote to Draper "in perfect confidence" explaining that Sully had suffered deep "domestic sorrows" which "has caused him at times, to use *stimulants* too freely to silence memory." Though he had somewhat recovered, thanks to the solicitous care of his family, she entreated Draper, as her brother's friend and sponsor, "to soothe and sustain, and keep him from that path." Her letter came too late, as she sadly wrote a week later. Her brother took sick at his Buffalo hotel, she explained, and was taken to a hospital, where he died on 28 October.

Dissatisfied with that account, Sully's sister asked Draper "to make some enquiries for us," and he wrote the society's Buffalo agent, Jesse Clement, for more details. Clement interviewed the hotel clerk, two doctors, and the nun who attended Sully in the hospital. Sully apparently went out to explore the city on the evening of the day he arrived and was absent from the hotel for four or five days. He returned bruised and dishevelled, his money gone, and bleeding internally. In the hospital, he began vomiting blood and expired. The doctors blamed drugs or alcohol; both agreed "he must have been on a 'hard spree.'" It was a blow to Draper. His school friend, Charles Larrabee, realizing that Draper had counted on a resident artist for the society, was sympathetic and wondered how Sully's death "will effect the worthy objects you are laboring for." Several years later, Sully's son wrote Draper that his father had suffered "life long malice and persecution" in Richmond, never receiving the support he deserved.³²

Draper's comments about Sully's death were brief but laudatory. "We cannot well over-estimate the loss," he wrote. The artist planned to "devote his superior talents to the honor of our State and Society." Later in the annual report, the librarian, S. H. Carpenter, extolled the merits of the paintings which Sully had done for the society. In true entrepreneurial style, however, Draper lost no time in soliciting the interest of artists in New York and Louisville, and asking friends for other recommendations. The upshot was that Samuel Brookes and Thomas H. Stevenson of Milwaukee were commissioned to paint several Wisconsin battlefields, which they agreed to do for \$100 a painting. In spite of Robert Sully's

demise, the society's Picture Gallery was well underway.³³

The drive to collect "likenesses" was only part of the society's plan to establish itself as a major center for historical materials. Although made up of multiple parts, history was still not complex; the more of these parts that could be brought together, the greater the opportunity for the citizenry to understand and appreciate history. History is "the reflector which enables us to account for the present," Draper wrote, "and shows us what may be the future, by placing the past vividly before us." The society's "chief aim," he continued, "is not so much to exhibit the treasures of history, as to gather scattered facts, investigate their credibility, and place them in their proper relations."

History for Draper and his associates was a science: all-embracing, dramatic, eminently knowable, and filled with heroes (and a few heroines). Collecting autographs, especially of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, was an important step in acknowledging a debt to history. Draper sought autographs for his own library and the society's. They are, one correspondent wrote, "the dewdrops of great men's minds," and the society vigorously encouraged its friends and correspondents to deposit these "dewdrops" in Madison.³⁴

Friends and correspondents were also urged to send the society relics and curiosities, and the number and variety of these were almost without limit. Looking back after a century and a half, one is hard put to justify these oddities, yet they were accepted with relish, if adequately verified. From the point of view of the mid-nineteenth century, however, the relics were a bit of the outside world, a peek into what was going on beyond the confines of the farm, the general store, and the church. In this earlier age, relics mirrored today's excitement of the TV soap opera, the radio mystery, and the movie documentary.

The annual reports, 1855 through 1858, document the range of the receipts, and Draper's correspondents provide a background of enthusiasm. Coins, stamps, and currency from old Rome to early Wisconsin were an annual staple. A silken tassel from the bed of Mary, Queen of Scots, a rosary from the Mount of Olives, Indian tools, war club, cooking utensils and wampum, beaver chips, Japanese oddities from the Perry expedition, a piece of linen from a mummy, silver sleeve buttons, relics of the Scots' rebellion, Charter Oak pieces, and an elk's horn embedded in an oak tree suggest the variety and vagaries of the society's Cabinet, where these items were stored.³⁵

Included in the list of cabinet items were several relating to American Indians. The mid-nineteenth century interest in Native American cultural objects was extensive, and, as a frontier state, Wisconsin

probably ran in the van of that interest. As early as January 1851, when the society was still primarily a hollow organization, meeting annually to hear an address, it resolved to ask a Waukesha resident to "furnish a paper on Indian appellations" and other geographical subjects. Three years later, J. W. Hunt was given the responsibility to investigate Indian names "and their signification." Portraits of Indian heroes and heroines, beginning with Robert Sully's Black Hawk and Pocahontas, were accumulated on a regular basis. By 1858, Draper could boast that 20 percent of the society's portrait collection of oils were of Native American subjects. The society's activity in this area was sufficient to attract the attention of an unidentified Lafayette, Indiana, correspondent who commented on its efforts "in preserving the manners, social life, traditions and history of the Aboriginal races. It is now a matter of deep regret," the writer concluded, "that so much has been already lost that relates to the poor Indian."³⁶

Newspapers were of particular interest to Draper and the society, and their enthusiastic pursuit of these materials formed a strong foundation for society's current unparalleled collection of United States newspapers. Cyrus Woodman credited William R. Smith with the idea, back in 1849, that the society emphasize the collection of newspapers. The first newspaper acknowledged, in January 1854, was the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* for 1776-1777, although that may not have been the first one received. From that time on, newspapers occupied an important element in the society's annual reports. The first year of Draper's tenure he reported the acquisition of 62 bound volumes of newspapers, some for two years or more. Half of these were Wisconsin papers, beginning with the first issue published in Wisconsin, the *Green Bay Intelligencer* for 11 December 1833. In addition, the society was collecting single issues of papers from Wisconsin and other states in preparation for binding. In behalf of the executive committee, Draper acknowledged newspapers' "inestimable value to the present and future historians, legislators, and jurists." Succeeding annual reports were equally upbeat, as the newspaper collection grew almost geometrically. In 1856, the society appealed to "a spirit of patriotism" on the part of editors, publishers, and other citizens with access to past and current newspaper files. Newspapers were "invaluable treasures," he proclaimed. "We *can* and we *must*, have the best and most complete collection of newspapers preserved by any State in the Union." By 1861, the society reported 757 bound volumes of newspapers and uncounted unbound issues, some awaiting binding, primarily covering the United States and England. There were, Draper said proudly, "few [collections] to equal it anywhere."

The society amassed this collection by gift, exchange and purchase.

While Draper seized every opportunity to acquire newspapers (and periodicals) from all over the country and from England, he did not lose sight of the Wisconsin connection. Late in 1853, the editor of the Watertown, Wisconsin, paper promised his file (including a separate temperance paper), and Increase Lapham suggested persons to be approached for files of the Milwaukee *Sentinel*. An editor-to-be in Platteville, Wisconsin, assumed that the current editor had sent files to the society and committed himself to "send it to you regularly" when he assumed control.

The society's reputation as a newspaper repository did not go unnoticed. Charles Norton, the society's New York agent, knew to offer to sell the society a "valuable file of early newspapers," and the executive committee authorized purchase, after examination. Sending a copy of an early issue of the Missouri *Gazette*, "the first paper published west of the Mississippi," a Racine resident explained that he knew it would be "better preserved in the State Historical Society under your care than anywhere else."³⁷

The man chiefly responsible for the society's reputation in these years before the Civil War was a 5' 2" tall, one-hundred-pound dynamo whose talents encompassed public relations, but not public speaking, persuasion but not political perceptiveness, a knowledge of historical materials, but not a historian's writing skills. No matter how much he chafed at delays and disputes, no matter how disappointed he was with the apparent lack of recognition, no matter how disabling his health, his personal finances, his writing blocks, Lyman C. Draper was the right man in the right place when he came to Madison and the society. He built a library; he had substantial support, but the major credit is his.

A recent review of Draper's career points out with some justification that he minimized the collection of archival materials, focusing instead on library assets. The point is well-taken, if not yet well-proven. His announced "new field of historic culture," referring to the opening of the Civil War, was an opportunity, he wrote, "for the Society to collect and preserve" its history, "as minutely detailed as we can possibly obtain it." Yet little came from this effort "to preserve diaries[,] secure diagrams" of military "localities, and collect relics and trophies." In the pre-Civil War era, except for one major interview with a 77-year old pioneer, Draper drew in very few correspondence files, personal records, diaries, and similar primary records. His reputation rests on his development of the society library.³⁸

He was not without help. His primary assistant was the society librarian, Daniel Steele Durrie. Durrie came to Madison in 1850 from

Albany, New York, where he had run a stationery and book store. After dabbling in insurance, he opened a similar establishment in Madison in 1854, taking on the voluntary job of society librarian in 1856. He closed his store the next year and, thanks to Draper's largesse, became a paid staff member in the library, a post he held until his death in 1892.

Durrie was a knowledgeable, steadying influence on Draper, the librarian's apparently plodding ways a counterweight to the more mercurial corresponding secretary. When out-of town visitors came to the society's rooms, Durrie often played host, presenting the visitor with the latest copy of the society's publications. Two years before the executive committee agreed that an aquarium was necessary, Durrie had made the inquiries about types and cost. When the executive committee heard a report on the "conditions and wants" of the library, Durrie presented it. Durrie assumed some of the burden of communicating with the society's agents in the major eastern cities. When Draper was elected state superintendent of public instruction in 1858 without giving up his society responsibilities, Durrie was there to mind the shop, write letters, suggest replies, and keep track of the incoming gifts and purchases. When Draper's term ended and he failed of reelection, Durrie was there to bring order from chaos. "The Librarian has devoted himself exclusively to the interests of the Library," reclassifying and reshelving books, Draper reported for 1861, "arranging and collating newspaper files for binding, and cataloguing the books proper and newspapers on the amplified card system of Prof. Jewett."³⁹

Table I (next page) indicates the acquisition pattern by category between 1854 and 1858. Data for the years 1859-1861 are not as complete or similarly classified. The categories themselves, Draper's inventions, carry a burden of ambiguity and the statistics are imprecise, but the momentum is clear. It is also revealing that a high percentage of the society's income in four of the five years was spent for library purchases. In one year (1856), the society bought more than it received as gifts (roughly 600 to 400 volumes), but in two other years (1857 and 1858), the numbers were reversed; many more volumes were given than were bought. Other expenditures were not frivolous: rent, printing, shelving, binding, copying, and insurance were essential to the stability of the society.⁴⁰

The statistics in Table I do not tell the whole story. The quality of what was acquired varied from the rare to the ridiculous, from the priceless to the prosaic; its expanse in subject matter was as wide as the then Western world. Among those acquisitions in 1855 which might be prized today were a folio work on Indians, with 120 colored engravings from the Indian Bureau, and 2,000 pamphlets on every conceivable subject including history, speeches, catalogues, essays, public documents, and eulogies. The next year

TABLE I
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN
ACQUISITIONS, 1854-1858

Category	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858
History (books, newspapers, Hist. Soc. publications)	466	471	841	831	747
Cumulative	466	937	1778	2609	3356
Congressional publications	132	377	89	30	5
Cumulative	132	509	598	628	633
Agricultural, scientific, mechanical arts	124	31	17	19	114
Cumulative	124	155	172	191	305
State laws, reports, journals	65	85	21	23	25
Cumulative	65	150	171	194	219
Miscellaneous	197	167	39	121	216
Cumulative	197	364	403	524	740
Total - Annual	984	1131	1005	1024	1107
Total-Cumulative	984	2117	3122	4146	5253

Cost of purchases and percent of total expenditures	\$431.65 87%	\$380.83 57%	\$888.40 78%	NA NA	\$920.57 84%

the society received a bequest of 66 volumes and gifts of 300 pamphlets and 206 bound newspaper files. By 1857, Draper was crowing about the society's pamphlet collection of over 4,200 items, including "unbound public documents." He was also proud of the five bound atlases and 13 maps which brought the society's total holdings to 16 bound atlases and over 50 separate maps, "the major part of which are quite rare and ancient." Substantial additions to all of these collections continued through the next four years, so that in 1861, the society reported 8,500 volumes, 7,200 pamphlets and unbound documents, and 757 bound newspaper volumes. In eight years, the society had matured from an idea with a few books to a research library with nationwide ideas.⁴¹

But a research library needs a home, and this target was the subject of an avid pursuit by Draper, Durrie, and, to a lesser extent, the executive

committee. In the spring of 1854, the society rented a room in the basement of the local Baptist church, which, with some improvements and additional space, was to be the society's home until after the Civil War. Almost from the beginning, Draper hammered home the need of a "fire-proof" building, even reporting the beginning of a small fund to facilitate it and assuring the public, especially the legislature, that "others [i. e., 'public-spirited citizens'] stand ready to contribute liberally when it shall be deemed a proper time to make an efficient investment." This was not to happen until the end of the century.

The inadequate space for the society did not seem to diminish the public's interest in visiting or using the library. In 1856, visitors from all over Wisconsin, from Green Bay to Janesville and Beloit, from Milwaukee to Mineral Point, dropped by. The rest of the country was represented also, with travelers from Boston and San Francisco, from Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Chicago, from New England, New York, the middle Atlantic states, and elsewhere registering their visit. The names of Wisconsin governors and legislators were sprinkled in with those of leading citizens like James Duane Doty, C. C. Washburn, Cyrus Woodman, Henry Barnard, and Timothy D. Howe. Women were welcome and appeared with some frequency; when accompanied by her husband, a woman visitor was occasionally identified by his name "and Lady."

It is difficult to determine the quantity or quality of research that was generated in these early years, but Draper's effusions in 1861, explaining the significance of the society's then-extensive newspaper collection, were cast in the future tense. After detailing the uses which lawyers and the courts might make of the collection, he concluded that "the Society is silently, yet constantly, collecting and preserving what will inevitably prove of vast importance to the pecuniary interest of every part of our State." Whether or not the state's "pecuniary interest" has benefitted from the unparalleled newspaper collection which began before the Civil War, the research potential established by these early collecting policies has been demonstrated many times over in the years that followed.⁴²

The materials which the society collected throughout the nineteenth century, prior to the active entry of the university library into the collecting field, covered a geographic area far beyond the continental limits and included some prized volumes. After 1900, the two libraries occupied the same building, operating under an informal agreement relative to collecting policies. When the university library moved into its own building in 1954, the two libraries began a two-year process of transferring non-United States and Canadian materials from the society to the university. The story is succinctly told by a participant, the former

university librarian, Louis Kaplan.⁴³

It is fair to say, then, that the early collecting policies established by the society, guided by Draper and supported by Durrie, provided the foundation for two exceptional research libraries. While the university has moved off into multiple fields, the collection of materials focusing on United States and Canadian history remains with the society, which serves as the university's research center for those areas.

The society's success can be tabulated in many ways, but it can be measured in terms of reputation and use. For the first, it holds an uncontested place among the primary American history research libraries in the nation. For the second, scholars who have depended on the society's holdings stretch across a century, from Frederick Jackson Turner to Richard Current and Merle Curti to the current prize-winning historian, William Cronon.

For all their quaint nineteenth century mannerisms, for all the bombast and confident predictions that never came to pass, for all their unsophisticated understanding of the nature of history and historical research, for all their qualms, quibbles, and quarrels, the leaders and supporters of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin created a broad base with their early collecting practices, a firm foundation on which succeeding generations were able to shape a major American institution.

ENDNOTES

1. The society's first annual report concluded with a long peroration, expressing the hope that the society would "never falter in its noble mission of gathering from the mouldering records of the past, the scattered fragments that yet remain, to render ample justice" to Wisconsin men in all walks of life for the good of the state "or to enlighten, improve, or ameliorate the condition of man." *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (reprint of 1855 ed., Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1903), v. 1, p. 15.
2. Lyman C. Draper, "Origin of the Society," Appendix No. 1, *Dedicatory Addresses, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Wednesday Evening, January 24, 1866* (Madison: Wisconsin Capitol Office, 1866), pp. 21-26; Reuben Gold Thwaites, "A Brief History of the Wisconsin Historical Society," *The State Historical Society of Wisconsin: Exercises at the Dedication of its New Building, October 19, 1900 . . .* (Madison: Democrat Printing Company, 1901), pp. 95-97.
3. Governor's Messages to the Legislature, 1848-1856, p. 4, Executive Department, Administration, Series 118, Wisconsin Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. [All archival and manuscript sources used in this essay are from this depository unless

otherwise noted.]

4. The list of signers is in Thwaites, "Brief History," pp. 98-99. See also Clifford L. Lord and Carl Ubbelohde, *Clio's Servant: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1846-1954* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967), pp. 8-9. James P. Danky, the society's newspaper and periodicals librarian, has suggested that the psychological drive to recreate what pioneers left behind moved them to establish familiar institutions like churches, libraries, academies, fellowship groups and, of course, historical societies, as "firsts" and thus leave their mark in their new land.

5. Lord and Ubbelohde, *Clio's Servant*, pp. 9-11.

6. Thwaites, "Brief History," p. 101.

7. William B. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission: The Story of Lyman Copeland Draper* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1954); Charles Larrabee, Madison, to Draper, 21 June 1852; Beriah Brown, Madison, to Draper, 5 September 1852; and other letters between those dates in Draper and Wisconsin Historical Society Correspondence. [Unless otherwise identified, all correspondence cited comes from this collection which is arranged chronologically.]

8. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, ch. 3; the quotation is on p. 47. In two long 28 March 1854 letters to Benson J. Lossing, Draper describes his personal library of manuscripts, interview notes, newspaper extracts, and about 1,500 volumes, valued, he said, at between \$8,000 and \$10,000. For indirect acknowledgements of Draper's established reputation, see E. B. O'Callaghan, Albany, 10 March, and Neville Craig, Pittsburgh, 13 March 1854, to Draper.

9. In some quarters, this American Plutarch was regarded as a light-fingered pickpocket, accused during his lifetime and after, of stealing the documentary heartbeat of several Atlantic and border states. Souped-up patriots and angst-driven descendants of some lesser figures ignored or overlooked several facts, chief among which was that almost all of Draper's original acquisitions were by gift or purchase, and those which were loaned were returned. Critics occasionally demanded the return of manuscripts which never existed or which Draper had never seen. Whatever the charge, the society was able to refute it with hard evidence. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, pp. 62, 290-291, 317-319. For an overview of the Draper collection, see Josephine L. Harper, *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1983), "Introduction," pp. xi-xxvii. The body of the *Guide* is a detailed description of the collection.

10. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, p. 106; Minutes of Proceedings, v. 1, 29 January 1849-18 March 1854, State Historical Society, Administration, Series 932, p. 27.

11. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, pp. 110-112, 117-120; William R. Smith, Mineral Point, to Draper, 20 April 1853.

12. The constitution is printed in Collections of the *State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, v. 1 [Reprint of 1855 edition] (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1903), pp.

lii-liv. Responses to Draper's pre-1854 requests are in the Draper and WHS Correspondence: John M. _____, Kenosha, 25 May 1853; Horatio G. Jones, Philadelphia, 27 May 1853; Joseph Dickson, Platteville, 4 September 1853; Quinn [?], Watertown, 3 December 1853; W. H. Prescott, Boston, 8 January 1854; J. H. Trumbull, Hartford, CT, 12 January 1854; Albert Ellis, Stevens Point, WI, 14 January 1854; and Francis Parkman, Boston, 16 January 1854. See also Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, p. 121.

13. *Collections*, v. 1, pp. lvi-lvii; Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, pp. 122-123. The legislature granted Draper \$500 in 1855 and the next year doubled both the salary and the society's appropriation. Edward P. Alexander, "An Art Gallery in Frontier Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 29 (March 1946): 285.

14. The late Alice E. Smith, the society's distinguished research historian, has succinctly characterized Draper's ambition "to build up a library on the history of the West." According to his view, she added, "the West began not many miles inland from the Atlantic." Alice E. Smith, "The Society as a Research Center," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 32 (March 1949): 272.

15. Draper, Madison, to [?], 14 May 1855 [presumably a draft].

16. Alexander, "An Art Gallery," p. 286; C. R. Starkweather, Chicago, to Draper, 26 January 1854; W. B. Ogden, Chicago, to Draper, 7 March 1855; Samuel Drake, Boston, to Draper, 9 March, 17 November 1854; J. Clement, Buffalo, to Draper, 24 November 1855; S. D. Bradford, West Roxbury, to Draper, 29 August 1859.

17. The legislative charter is reproduced in the minutes of the society's adjourned annual meeting of 21 March 1853, *Collections*, v. 1, pp. xlix-l; Certificate of Honorary Membership for Brantz Mayer, 4 March 1854. The descriptive material carries the printed date of 1 March 1854. See the 1854 letters of acceptance from C. R. Starkweather, Chicago, 26 January; I. A. Lapham, Milwaukee, and Jesse Clement, Buffalo, 28 January; Samuel Drake, Boston, 31 January; Joel Munsell, Albany, 1 February; C. C. Simmons, St. Louis, and Charles B. Norton, New York, 6 February.

18. David L. Green, "Samuel G. Drake and the Early Years of the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 145 (July 1991): 203-233, for Drake and Munsell. Both of them are in *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1928, 1934), v. 1, p. 401 (Drake) and v. 13, p. 333 (Munsell). See also letters to Draper from Drake, Boston, 9 March 1854; Munsell, Albany, 8 March 1854, Norton, N.Y., 12 and 23 November 1855; and Starkweather, Chicago, 11 December 1854.

19. Lapham, Milwaukee, to Draper, 28 January, 13 April 1854. The quotation is from Michael Edmonds, "Increase Lapham and the Mapping of Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 68 (Spring 1985): 164, but see also 163-165.

20. Letters from those mentioned in March 1854 in Draper and WHS Correspondence.

21. Third Annual Meeting, 21, 22 January 1852, *Collections*, v. 1, p. xlvi; Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, 18 January 1854 to 1 November 1897, SHSW, Administration, Series 932, 6 April 1854, p. 16.
22. John Langdon Sibley, Cambridge, MA, to Draper, 21 March [two letters], 27 June 1854.
23. Charles B. Trego, Philadelphia, to Draper, 4 May 1854; Joseph Henry, Washington, to Draper, 5 May 1854; New-York Historical Society Membership Certificate, 7 February 1857; George H. Moore, New York, to Draper, 28 October 1856; William Barry, Chicago, to Draper, 3 November 1856, 27 April 1857.
24. Samuel Conger, Newark, to Daniel Steele Durrie [Wisconsin Society librarian], 24 August 1860; N. N. Wood, Alton, IL, to Draper, 24 June 1859; W. A. Gorman, St. Paul, to Draper, 18 May 1854; G. Taylor, Philadelphia, to Draper, 22, 28 October 1861; A. S. Packard, Brunswick, ME, to Durrie, 21 August 1860; Henry Wheatland, Salem, MA, to Durrie, 1 June 1860; M. Van Hoose, Tuscaloosa, AL, to Draper, 8 June 1857; A. W. Putnam, Nashville, to Draper, 27 February 1857; C. Billings Smith, Iowa City, to Draper, 9 February 1857.
25. See the following letters to Draper: W. M. Hutchinson, Lawrence, 20 June 1859; William P. Palmer, Richmond, 15 December 1857; Albert G. Mackey, Charleston, 5 March 1856; C. T. Noble, Terre Haute, 29 May 1857; George Burt, St. Augustine, 11 July 1857, 4 May 1859; Alfred Russell, Detroit, 9 September 1857; and Elijah Hayward, Columbus, OH, 24 April 1854. See also S. Alofsen, Jersey City, to Durrie, 11 October 1860, and William J. Sloan, Santa Fe, to President, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 12 February 1860.
26. William P. Palmer, Richmond, to Draper, 15 December 1857; Parkman, Boston, to Draper, 19 March 1858.
27. Annual Message of the Governor, 10 January 1851, Governors' Messages to the Legislature, 1848-1856, v. 1, pp. 82-83; Executive Committee meeting, 6 April 1854, Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, p. 16; Alexandre Vattemare, Paris, to Draper, 12 June 1854.
28. Alexandre Vattemare, Paris, to Draper, 5 January 1855; W. B. Ogden, Chicago, to Draper, 7 March 1855; Third Annual Report [1856], 6 January 1857, *Collections*, v. 3, pp. 18-19; Fourth Annual Report [1857], 1 January 1858, *ibid.* v. 4, p. 17; Fifth Annual Report [1858], 4 January 1859, *ibid.* v. 4, p. 53; Sixth Annual Report [1859], 3 January 1860, *ibid.*, v. 5, p. 3. The *Dictionary of American Biography* sketch of Ogden is in v. 12, pp. 644-45.
29. Draper to Doty, 21 March 1854; B. Woodcroft, London, to Draper, 11 January 1855; Nicolaus Trubner, London, to Draper, 20 August 1855; Norton, New York, to Draper, 12, 23 November 1855, from London, 31 July 1856, from New York, 21, 29 August 1856.
30. Vojta Naprsktek, Milwaukee, to Draper, 20 September 1856; Third Annual Report (1856), *Collections*, v. 3, pp. 39, 42; Woodman, Bremen, to Draper, 22 December 1856 (two letters); Fourth Annual Report (1857), *Collections*, v. 4, pp. 19-21. See also Pedro Saban,

Madrid, to Draper, 11 July 1857 (two letters, in translation). Charles B. Norton, the society's New York agent, offered Draper "large editions" of several British publishers "at very low prices." Norton, Philadelphia, to Draper, 18 November 1858; Fifth Annual Report (1858), *Collections*, v. 4, pp. 48, 73, 76; Norton, Cologne, London, and New York, to Draper, 30 July, 7, 8 October 1859 [the New York letter, so identified, was actually written from London]; Wm. Brotherhead, Philadelphia, to Draper, 22 October 1858. When the Executive Committee learned of the possibility of receiving the British publication, they asked George M. Dallas, the United States Minister to England, "to use his kind offices" to insure the gift. He replied that he had been successful. Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, meetings of 2 September and 2 December 1856, pp. 61, 66.

31. Second Annual Report (1855), *Collections*, v. 2, p. 40; First Annual Report (1854), *ibid.*, v. 1, p. 12.

32. Sully's 1854 letters to Draper, which are cited, are dated 20 March, 20 April, 13 May, and ? October; Sully's 1855 letters to Draper, which are cited, are dated 13 April and 26 June. Other letters are dated 31 May 1854 and 10 February, 16 March, ? March (with enclosure), 13 July and 28 August 1855. All of Sully's letters were sent from Richmond. See also M. R. Chamberlayne, Richmond, to Draper, 3, 10 November 1855; J. Clement, Buffalo, to Draper, 24 November 1855; Draper to Milo Jones, 16 August 1855 (on the promise of Sully as a resident artist); Charles Larrabee, Horicon, to Draper, 25 December 1855; Edwin Sully, St. Paul, to Draper, 3 April 1858.

33. At this time, the librarian's position was unpaid and filled by an executive committee member. Carpenter was succeeded in 1856 by Daniel S. Durrie, who became a paid staff member. Second Annual Report (1855), *Collections*, v. 2, pp. 17, 41-48. For a more modern and critical view of Sully's work, see Alexander, "An Art Gallery," p. 290. Letters to Draper from J. Phillips, New York, 26 December 1855, Jno. F. Francis, Louisville, 29 December 1855, E. G. Ryan, Milwaukee (recommending Samuel Brookes), 31 December 1855, Samuel Brookes, Milwaukee, 24 January 1856; executive committee meeting of 16 May 1856, Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, p. 56. For a concise interpretive description of a Brookes-Stevenson effort, illustrated with examples of their work, see Alice E. Smith, "The Fox River in Paintings," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51 (Winter 1967-68): 139-154.

34. See Circular of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1 March 1854 [attached to membership certificates] for a list of desired items. The quotation on history is from Sixth Annual Report (1859), *Collections*, v. 5, p. 2. The quotation on autographs is from Wm. Brotherhead, Philadelphia, to Draper, 22 October 1858. Other Draper correspondents who identify the importance of autographs include Charles B. Trego, Philadelphia, 4 May 1854, Wm. D. Read, New Castle, DE, 30 January 1855, Henry S. Randall, Cortland Village, N. Y., 21 July 1855, and C. A. Moore, Boston, 29 November 1859. The annual reports of the society's executive committee list the autographs received in that year: *Collections*, v. 1-5, (1854), pp. 10-11; (1855), p. 10; (1856), pp. 11-12; (1857), pp. 24-26; (1858), p. 55. The printed annual reports for 1859-1861 were summaries, published in 1867, and omitted reference to autographs.

35. The Annual Reports in *Collections*, v. 2-4, (1855), pp. 11-12; (1856), pp. 12-14; (1857), pp. 26-30; (1858), pp. 55-61. For Draper's correspondents, see, for example, D. W. Ballou,

Watertown, WI, 5, 24 February 1855, R. B. McCabe, Blairsville, PA, 10 December 1855, and W. H. Watson, Governor's Office, Madison, 8 October 1858.

36. Annual meeting, 16 January 1851, 7 February 1854, *Collections*, v. 1, pp. xlii, lvi; Annual Reports (1856-1858), *ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 12-13; v. 3, pp. 17-18; v. 4, pp. 28-29 [repeats verbatim the previous year's comment]; v. 5, p. 63. See also ? [signature missing], Lafayette, IN., to Draper, 14 January 1858. Increase A. Lapham, the estimable scientist from Milwaukee and resident expert on Indian mounds was confused when Abner Morse raised the thorny question of a Norse settlement in the upper midwest several centuries before Columbus. Lapham admitted that the evidence on hearth construction, cited by Morse, did not describe Native American hearths. Unhappily, because this detail of Amerindian culture failed to explain the Norse settlement mystery, it encouraged what became a bitter historical controversy rather than enhancing Wisconsin's appreciation of Native American culture. Abner Morse, Boston, to Historical Society Secretary, 30 March 1860; Lapham, Milwaukee, to Draper, 9 April 1860.

37. Cyrus Woodman, Mineral Point, to Draper, 18 July 1855. He told Draper that the correspondence which documented Smith's early suggestion had been sent to the society on 18 April 1849. Meeting of 18 January 1854, *Collections*, v. 1, p. lii; Annual Reports, *ibid.*, v. 1-5, (1854), pp. 7-8; (1855), pp. 7-8; (1856), pp. 7-10 [quotation on p. 9]; (1857), pp. 22-23; (1858), pp. 50-51; (1861), pp. 6-8 [quotation on p. 7]. See also the following letters to Draper: Quinn [?], Watertown, 3 December 1853, Lapham, Milwaukee, 28 January 1854, and Harland M. Page, Platteville, 19 September 1854; Meeting of 22 December 1857, Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, p. 80; C. Clement, Racine, to Draper, 17 October 1859.

38. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission*, pp. 154, 123, 153, and *passim*; Carolyn Mattern, "Lyman C. Draper: Another Look," (Paper read at the 1991 annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, copy in my possession); Eighth Annual Report (1861), *Collections*, v. 5, p. 10. Draper appeared to give equal weight to diaries, diagrams, and relics.

39. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The Other Builder: Daniel Steele Durrie and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin," (manuscript scheduled for publication in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* in 1995); C. Compton Smith, Milwaukee, to Durrie, 15 May 1858; John Hall, Newton, N. J., to Durrie, 23 May 1859; Meeting of 7 February 1860, Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, p. 114; A. T. Matthews, Buffalo, to Durrie, 2 July 1858; Meeting of 5 February 1861, Minutes of Proceedings, v. 2, p. 126; Samuel Drake, Boston, to Durrie, 5 September 1858; Wm. B. Trask, Boston, to Durrie, 11 September 1860; Charles Brooks, Medford, MA, to Durrie, 13 September 1860 [see postscript]; Wm. Darlington, West-Chester, PA, to Durrie, 12 July 1858; Eighth Annual Report (1861), *Collections*, v. 5, p. 8.

40. Table and narrative data from First through Fifth Annual Reports (1854-1858), *Collections*, v. 1, p. 7; v. 2, pp. 6, 26; v. 3, pp. 3, 37-38; v. 4, pp. 18-19, 47, 71.

41. Second through Fourth, Eighth Annual Reports (1855-1857, 1861), *Collections*, v. 2, p. 7, 8; v. 3, pp. 4-5, 7, 10; v. 4, p. 24; v. 5, pp. 6-7.

42. Lord and Ubbelohde, *Clio's Servant*, p. 26; Second through Fourth, Eighth Annual Reports, *Collections*, v. 2, p. 18; v. 3, pp. 24-26; v. 4, p. 35; v. 5, p. 8; Register of Visitors, Series 940, v. 1, 1856-1862.
43. Louis Kaplan, "Two Wisconsin Libraries, 1854-1954," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, v. 71, Pt. 2 (1983), pp. 122-130.

Trans-Mississippi States: Arkansas, California, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, and Texas

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The history of gathering primary and secondary materials relevant to the history of Louisiana (1812), Missouri (1821), Arkansas (1836), Texas (1845), Iowa (1846), California (1850), Minnesota (1858), and Oregon (1859) reflects the development of those same states before and after statehood. Several states appear to be characterized by little activity on behalf of preserving their documentary heritage during the antebellum period. However, in the absence of formal institutions, an examination of reading habits, the development of libraries (both public and private), and the emergence of a variety of cultural entities, ranging from universities to theatrical organizations, indicates a firm foundation was being prepared for future historical agencies.

The states covered in this essay, at first glance, appear to have little in common. However, the historical links are many. The waterways of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Minnesota, and Texas were traveled by French explorers. After French rule of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri, they were, like Texas and California, under Spanish rule. The Catholic monarchs established the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas in 1793, uniting states as topographically different as Louisiana and Iowa. The Louisiana Purchase, and the resulting resolution of foreign claims to many

of these states, further unites the seemingly disparate lot. Examined on an individual basis, the peculiarities of each state is highlighted. However, common themes of appreciation of pioneer and Indian alike, natural history, the esteem of books under the most rugged of circumstances, and the role of history as a vital ally for a prosperous future serve to further unite these states.

Louisiana (admitted to statehood 1812)

René Cavalier de la Salle commissioned a notary public, Jacques de la Metairie, as the official recorder of his voyage of exploration. Metairie's 9 April 1682 *process-verbal* describing La Salle's claiming Louisiana for Louis XIV is one of the earliest official French records created in Louisiana.¹ It also marks the beginning of the Louisiana's archival tradition. A special order of 2 August 1717 concerned notaries in Louisiana and the preservation of the acts. The royal order dictated that all previous and subsequent Louisiana notarial acts be chronologically bound and dated on the spine.² During the Spanish colonial period of Louisiana, the number of notaries that could be licensed was strictly limited, and an appointment as a royal notary was particularly coveted.³ The notarial system, outlined by French and Spanish policy, continues to function as the New Orleans Notarial Archives.⁴

The Catholic Church was the handmaiden of conquest, colonization, and government during the Spanish period of Louisiana history. The most famous of all clerics in the colonial and early American periods was the Spaniard Antonio de Sedella, affectionately known as Pere Antoine. While well known for his long tenure as pastor of the St. Louis Cathedral, he was also an ardent record keeper. Indeed, he was the first archivist in Louisiana known to reformat documents for preservation purposes. Seeing that the sacramental records of the French period were rapidly deteriorating, he recopied them for posterity. It was his copy of those sacramental records that was saved during the tragic fire of Good Friday, 1788.⁵ Luis Peñalver y Cárdenas, first bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas, in 1797 appointed Francisco Brutin as archivist, noting that he possessed the necessary qualifications.⁶ The same day, Brutin appeared before Peñalver and took the oath of office.⁷ Four years later, Brutin, at age 75 and with failing eyesight, submitted his resignation.⁸ The resignation was accepted and the archives turned over to the bishop's secretary for safekeeping⁹ until Francisco Bermudes was named the new archivist.¹⁰

Louisiana, with the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso, became a French province again in 1800. Pierre Clement Laussat, himself a historian, was

dispatched as colonial prefect. Upon arrival in 1803, Laussat requested a thorough inventory of the Spanish records and demanded access to all archives.¹¹ He oversaw the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France to the United States. He ordered that the records of all Spanish posts be inventoried and appropriate documents be delivered to him for transfer to the Americans.¹² Aware of the importance of all maps and plans, Laussat personally oversaw their transfer to American authorities.¹³ He requested that United States commissioners William C. C. Claiborne and James Wilkinson appoint two individuals to receive the government records and prepare a suitable repository.¹⁴ As a young state, Louisiana was conscious of gathering critical documentation as seen in the state's purchase of the papers of the Spanish royal surveyor Carlos Trudeau from his widow.¹⁵ Sixty-five years later the land records were destroyed in a fire. Louisiana then commissioned duplicates based on copies in the possession of individuals.¹⁶

The achievement of statehood in 1812 and the glories of the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 awakened a particularly keen interest in the state's history.¹⁷ Much impetus for the study of Louisiana history came from the state Supreme Court. Judge Francis Xavier Martin inaugurated the publication of Supreme Court records from 1809 forward. His colleague, Henry Adams Bullard, was instrumental in founding the Historical Society of the State of Louisiana in New Orleans in 1836.¹⁸ Yet, the first recognition of the organization by the state of Louisiana did not occur until the General Assembly of 1848. At that time the secretary of state was authorized and required to deposit with the society all public documents, journals, reports of the decisions of the Supreme Court, and publications received from other states.¹⁹ In Bullard's 1836 address to the organization, the writing of local history and the preservation of the public records were urged.²⁰ Bullard also noted the importance of archival materials for the understanding of the Louisiana Territory. He observed:

It is obvious that many of the original documents and records, relating to the settlement and colonization of that extensive region, must exist in the public archives at Paris, Madrid, and Seville, as well as Havana; some in the archives of the former government in this city [New Orleans], at St. Louis and Natchez; others again at notaries' offices, here; in the parochial records of the different posts in the interior, and much interesting matter in possession of the families of some of the earlier settlers of the country.²¹

He strongly felt it was the responsibility of each generation to furnish to its successors the documents and materials by which its achievements could be judged. It was his belief that the young society should have a three-part

plan of action. The first part was to document the general history of the province of Louisiana; the second was to be devoted to the development of jurisprudence; and the final was to focus on the condition of the Indian tribes.²²

The first historical society suspended activities after a few meetings but was revived in 1846 as the Louisiana Historical Society.²³ In 1846, Charles E. A. Gayarre became secretary of state and began an official project to organize and collect the colonial records. Louisiana's colonial and territorial archives were of particular interest to him. He soon convinced the governor to allow him to purchase \$1,000 worth of blank paper so that documents in both France and Spain could be copied. One year later, more funds were appropriated for that purpose.²⁴ In 1850 Gayarre completed his "Report to the Legislature on the Louisiana Archives in Spain."²⁵ Regrettably, the organization did not continue Gayarre's momentum and became significantly less active.²⁶

The historical society, as custodian of the above described state papers, maintained them in New Orleans until the Civil War disrupted life. With the fall of New Orleans to Union troops, the legislature moved the headquarters of the Louisiana Historical Society to Baton Rouge. However, disaster struck in 1862 when Union soldiers captured Baton Rouge. The State House was burned and the archives were looted by both armies. Some 15 years would pass before the historical society could reorganize.²⁷

Just as the Catholic Church had tried to care for records during the colonial period, several organizations with antebellum origins made conscious efforts to maintain their records. Chief among these is the *Deutsche Gessellschaft*. While an archives committee was not founded until the late nineteenth-century, the antebellum records were meticulously maintained.²⁸ Another notable case is that of the archives of the French consul general in New Orleans. Now preserved at the *Centre des Archives Diplomatique* in Nantes, France, they contain some 361 bundles of documents and more than 20,000 dossiers on individual Frenchmen in Louisiana.²⁹

Missouri (admitted to statehood 1821)

The origins of book collecting in Missouri can be traced to the colonial period. At least 56 colonial book collectors have been identified, some boasting of libraries with five or six hundred volumes. In Ste. Genevieve, one Pierre Peyroux had a collection of several hundred volumes by the late eighteenth century. Pierre de Luziere of Nouvelle Bourbon, the last Spanish lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana, had a library of six

hundred volumes in 1806.³⁰

Newspapermen played a role in the development of Missouri's state historical consciousness. Joseph Charless stated in the 1808 prospectus for his *Missouri Gazette* that newspapers had a responsibility to enlighten and improve readers' minds. Another editor noted that newspapers should give attention to the resources, capabilities, and peculiarities of the "local country."³¹

In 1844, the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society was founded in the state's capital, Jefferson City. Its constitution stated the purpose: to collect and preserve all papers, documents, and materials connected with the early history of Missouri.³² The 1848 *Annals* of the society encouraged newspaper editors and publishers to donate copies to the young organization. Authors of books and pamphlets, likewise, were asked to give copies of their publications to the society. "Competent people" were encouraged to write local histories. An important activity was the location and description of Indian tribes and accurate accounts of Indian conflicts. The documentation of early French and Spanish settlements, forts, and posts was also viewed as critical. Studies of pioneer life, economic history, and early immigration patterns, especially concerning the relation of Missouri to New Orleans and Canada, were encouraged. Documenting the evolution of the state's government was essential to the society's organizers.³³

William M. Campbell, founder and president of the organization, recognized the need for a large membership for financial and political support. He encouraged the society to "embrace as active members a much larger number of the citizens of the State, in order that its funds may be adequate to the accomplishment of the objects of its formation."³⁴ Seven years after its establishment the society was dissolved and its possessions entrusted to the secretary of state. Eventually space dictated that they be moved to a basement for storage. During the Civil War the allocated space became a military hospital. The Missouri Historical Society, established in 1866 by the scholar, soldier, and educator, Elihy Hotchkiss Shepard, was the successor to the Historical and Philosophical Society.³⁵ Colonel James O. Broadhead, a member of both societies, traveled to Jefferson City to locate the holdings of the earlier organization. He learned that all that remained of the old society were a few bound volumes of newspapers.³⁶

The Western Academy of Natural Sciences established in St. Louis in 1836 preceded the 1856 Academy of Science of St. Louis. The latter's mission resembled very much that of a historical society. Its founders were Dr. George Engelmann, a botanist; Dr. Frederick Wislizenus, a natural historian; and Karl Andreas Geyer, a naturalist.³⁷ The published

Transactions of the academy focused on the botany, geology, and paleontology of the trans-Mississippi West. Equally important was the academy's museum. Its strength and focus was the trans-Mississippi West. The museum outgrew its space, and plans were made to move it to larger quarters. Regrettably, fire struck, and the specimens were so badly damaged that they were rendered useless.³⁸

Like the Academy of Science that suffered a major fire and the holdings of Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society that were compromised for a military hospital, public record keeping was dealt a major blow when fire ravished the State House in Jefferson City on 17 November 1837 and consumed all of the papers in the secretary of state's office. Seventeen years of critical documentation, including original acts signed by the governor and the library, was lost.³⁹

During the final years of the antebellum period, three Missouri "custodians of culture" were born: Francis Asbury Sampson (1842-1918), Thomas Moore Johnson (1851-1919), and William Keeney Bixby (1857-1931). Bixby assembled a collection of literary and historical manuscripts that attracted national respect. Johnson focused his collecting efforts on Platonic philosophy. Sampson gathered, in the opinion of at least one author, the finest collection of Missouriana. Containing many early Missouri state documents that had survived fire and war, his collection became the core of the reference library of the State Historical Society of Missouri, founded in 1898.⁴⁰

Arkansas (admitted to statehood 1836)

An invitation to "friends of science in the city of Little Rock" resulted in the formation of the Antiquarian Association of Little Rock on 16 May 1837.⁴¹ With a constitution, officers, and a membership fee, this became the first of a succession of such societies.⁴² On 25 November of the same year the society was incorporated by the state of Arkansas and renamed The Antiquarian and Historical Society of the State of Arkansas. An August 1841 article in the *Arkansas State Gazette* described the society's "cabinet of curiosities" as containing remains of "several great fossil animals," nine examples of Indian pottery, 13 Indian relics, arrowheads, a Spanish inscription on stone, and minerals. The author, Dr. William Gaulding, concluded by encouraging the donation of manuscript histories of each "county and district." In spite of his encouragement, years later one pioneer statesman noted that the founders "had been so busy attending to their daily duties that few kept any notes and never thought of any one ever wishing to hear what they had done." Four years after the society was

formed, the president noted that more than a hundred items had been donated to the organization. However, many valuable items were also reported as lost, including the remains of the fossil animals, due to ignorance of their value.⁴³ Still, the young historical organization was aware that it had more than a cultural mission. The founders were also aware of the economic and scientific value of such a society. George W. Featherstonhaugh's report on the geology of Missouri and Arkansas did much to encourage businessmen to further their knowledge about the natural resources awaiting financial development.⁴⁴ After 1842, no further mention of the Antiquarian Society is found.⁴⁵

Leslie W. Dunlap observed in *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* that "historical societies can exist only where there is considerable interest in cultural institutions."⁴⁶ Arkansas was no exception. One year after the invitation "to friends of science" was issued, both the *Arkansas Times and Advocate* and *Arkansas State Gazette* carried news of a meeting of "citizens of Little Rock" favorable to the "erection of a Theatre" on 23 July 1838.⁴⁷ In 1843, the first library in Little Rock, and perhaps the first in Arkansas, was founded. It ended tragically during the Civil War as many books were taken as bounty by soldiers.⁴⁸ The Arkansas Supreme Court Library, founded in 1851, is the oldest library still functioning in the state.⁴⁹ In comparison to the Supreme Court Library, the State Library was created in the Arkansas secretary of state's office in 1838. However, no money was appropriated for its operation. Nearly 70 years later, it was described as being "only such in name."⁵⁰

Among prominent Arkansas collectors during this period were Will Henry Halliburton (born 1816). A native of Tennessee, he moved to Arkansas in 1845 and was admitted to the bar two years later. His collection of books, coins, Indian pottery, and manuscripts was assembled due to his desire to write a history of Arkansas County. Judge U. M. Rose (born 1834 in Kentucky), also a lawyer, assembled a large library of secondary sources relating to Arkansas history, as well as primary sources. Benjamin T. Duval (born 1827), a native of what is now West Virginia, moved to Arkansas at the age of two. A lawyer with an intense interest in Arkansas history, he assembled material for a projected history of the state.⁵¹

The records of state offices such as the attorney general, general land office, secretary of state, and Supreme Court all managed to preserve records from the antebellum period.⁵² Unfortunately, a large number of records maintained by the counties burned during the nineteenth century⁵³ and municipal records can be described, at best, as scarce.⁵⁴ Churches, however, did manage to maintain records.⁵⁵

Texas (admitted to statehood 1845)

While inventories of deceased Texans revealed that most owned only a few books of dubious literary quality, Texas enjoyed a good number of book collectors early in its history. Dr. Ashbel Smith of Houston and Galveston reportedly had the best library in the Republic of Texas. It included works by English poets and essayists, a substantial number of medical books, and works on a variety of writers such as Confucious, Plato, Spinoza, and Descartes. Ira Ingram of Vermont settled in southern Texas with his brother. In 1827, he described his daily regime, noting that reading was a principal enjoyment. He and his brother had a library of between three and four hundred volumes. By the 1840s, booksellers were operating in Houston, Galveston, and Matagorda. In addition to a variety of magazines, newspapers, and popular novels, histories of Texas and the United States were found on their shelves.⁵⁶

In 1837 the Philosophical Society of Texas was founded with the express purpose of accumulating a library and a collection of mineralogical, geological, and natural history specimens. However, the society soon disappeared. The first known attempt to open a circulating library was made in 1839 when Henry F. Byrne and Company started the Houston Circulating Library, an 892-volume collection that Hubert Howe Bancroft eventually acquired.⁵⁷ Books about Texas were appearing during this period, and although targeted for out-of-state distribution, they indicated the growing historical consciousness in Texas.⁵⁸

Another indication of growing interest in Texas history was the formation in Fayette County of a literary society that published the *Prairie Blume* (Prairie Flower). The members of this society were the young people of the Latin Settlement (Das Lateinische Settlement) south of La Grange. Well-educated Central Europeans, they sought to give children more educational opportunities than were available locally. In the few surviving copies of the *Prairie Blume* the two principal topics are the experiences of young pioneers and the current social and political conditions of Europe. While many French words, such as "frappant," "fontaine," and "revier" demonstrate European influence, a good number of Texas words such as "Bowie knife," "farm," "teamster," "prairie," "store," and "creek bottom" distinguish the publication.⁵⁹

Mary Austin Holley, Stephen Austin's cousin, in 1836 published *Texas*, a vivid account of her impressions. Matilda C. F. Houstoun, of England, published in 1843 a description of the Galveston-Houston area under the title *Texas and the Gulf of Mexico*. William Kennedy's *Texas* (1841), Frederick Law Olmsted's *A Journey through Texas*, and Ferdinand

Roemer's *Texas* are indicative of an awareness of local history.⁶⁰ Two of the more popular items on Texas bookstore shelves were Henderson Yoakum's *History of Texas* and *The Texas Almanac*. The *Texian*, a monthly magazine devoted to the literature, historical romances, original tales, and incidents in the history of Texas, appeared in 1858. Published in Galveston and edited by a woman, it further underscored interest in local history.⁶¹ During the 1850s the number of libraries also increased significantly. Numbering twelve in the 1850 census, 132 libraries were reported in the 1860 census.

In 1842, one incident occurred that played a decisive role in the location of the capital of the Republic of Texas. It was brought on by a dispute resulting from President Sam Houston's attempt to remove the archives of the republic from Austin to Houston. The archives consisted primarily of land titles, treaties between Texas and European powers, tattered artifacts, the seal of the republic, the military records from the revolutionary period, and a variety of manuscripts and documents comprising the official papers of the government. The value placed upon these archives was attested to during the Texas Revolution. In 1836, the records were moved from one locality to another to prevent capture by the Mexicans. The archives eventually arrived in Austin, after its selection as the seat of government. The Mexican invasion of March 1842 gave then President Sam Houston the opportunity to move the archives for security considerations. According to the constitution, it was a justifiable action as the seat of government could be moved in the event of an emergency. Stating that the destruction "of the national archives would entail irreparable injury upon the whole people of Texas, and their safe preservation should be a consideration of paramount importance to that officer of the government for such safe preservation," Houston ordered that the archives be prepared for removal to a safer location. Finally, on 30 December 1842, the removal of the records was begun by Colonel Thomas Ward, commissioner of the General Land Office. Colonel Ward succeeded in almost loading the archives for transport without incident. However, a boardinghouse keeper discovered the activity and sounded the alarm. The archives departed. Eighteen miles from Austin, camp was set up for the night. At daybreak, the forces guarding the archives found themselves surrounded with the choice to surrender the archives or fight. The records were returned to Austin.⁶²

After the "archives war," the treasurer's office burned in 1845 with only slight loss of documents. In 1855, the adjutant general's office burned with the irreparable loss of the muster rolls of the soldiers of the Texas Revolution. The capitol building burned in 1881, but there was only slight

loss of material. The records were then stored wherever space was available and moved to the new capitol building upon its completion in 1888. The critical date in the history of the Texas Archives is 1876 when the Department of Insurance, Statistics and History was created, and the Texas State Library was named the legal depository for the archives of the state and the office of record for the various departments.⁶³

The origins of the Texas State Library can be traced to the days of the republic, when it was established by a joint resolution of the Third Congress (1839) of the Republic of Texas. Ten thousand dollars was appropriated for the purchase of books, with subsequent appropriations in 1856 and 1860. In 1848 the legislature authorized and required the exchange of copies of all laws, judicial reports, maps, charts, and publications of the state legislature, with the Library of Congress, all state libraries, and foreign countries.⁶⁴

While there was much and varied activity to promote and preserve Texas history, it was not until 1897 that a number of citizens interested in Texas history gathered to discuss the formation of a state historical association. From the earliest meetings, the University of Texas in Austin was prominent, both through the involvement of faculty and the use of facilities.⁶⁵

Iowa (admitted to statehood 1846)

While the operation of state offices—including those of the attorney general,⁶⁶ auditor of public accounts,⁶⁷ governor,⁶⁸ registrar of state land office,⁶⁹ secretary of state,⁷⁰ state printer,⁷¹ superintendent of public instruction,⁷² and treasurer—had clear responsibility for the maintenance of records under the 1846 constitution and subsequent laws of Iowa,⁷³ it was not until January 1857 that a permanent annual appropriation "for the benefit of a State Historical Society" was approved by the legislature.⁷⁴ The organization's 7 February 1857 constitution, reflecting the influence of Lyman C. Draper's experience with the preservation of Wisconsin's historical records,⁷⁵ clearly stated its purpose:

The object of this Society shall be to collect, embody, arrange, and preserve in authentic form, a library of books, pamphlets, maps, charts, manuscripts, papers, paintings, stationery and other materials illustrative of the history of Iowa; to rescue from oblivion the memory of its early pioneers; to obtain and preserve narratives of their exploits, perils and hardy adventures; to secure facts and statements relative to the history, genius, progress or decay of our Indian tribes, to exhibit faithfully the antiquities, and the past and present resources of the State; and to promote the study of history by lectures, and diffuse and publish

information relating to the description and history of Iowa.⁷⁶

The young society's annual state appropriation, however, was a mere \$250. In 1860 it was raised to \$500,⁷⁷ a meager sum given the organization's mandate. While the original act of appropriation referred to the society as operating "in connection with and under the auspices of the State University," the statement was not clearly defined and jurisdictional authority was questioned. Some fifty years would elapse before the clause was interpreted as a means to permanently locate the society at Iowa City, where it would be "fostered by the literary and scientific influences of the University," but independent.⁷⁸

While the initial appropriations were meager, the organization strove to refine its goals and priorities. The *First Annual Report of the State Historical Society of Iowa for the Year 1857* presented a clear collections development policy reflecting the organization's purpose:

Objects of Collections desired by the Society.

1. Manuscript statements of Pioneer Settlers—old Letters and Journals, relative to the early history and settlement of the State; biographies and notices of eminent citizens, deceased; and facts illustrative of our Indian tribes, their history, characteristic sketches of their prominent Chiefs, Orators and Warriors, together with contributions of Indian Implements, dress, ornaments and curiosities.
2. Files of old Newspapers, Books, Pamphlets, College Catalogues, Minutes of Ecclesiastical Associations, Conventions, Conferences and Synods, and other publications relating to the history of the State.
3. Information respecting any ancient coin, or other curiosities found in this State. Drawings and descriptions of any ancient mound or fortifications, are especially solicited.
4. Indian geographical names of streams and localities in the State, and the signification.
5. Books of all kinds, and especially such as relate to American History, travels and biographies in general, and in the West in particular, family genealogies, old magazines, pamphlets, files of newspapers, maps, historical manuscripts, autographs of distinguished persons, coins, medals, paintings, portraits, statuary and engravings.
6. We solicit from historical societies and other learned bodies, that interchange of books and other materials by which the usefulness of institutions of this nature is so much enhanced—pledging ourselves to pay such contributions by acts in kind to the full extent of our ability.
7. The Society particularly begs the favor and compliment of authors and publishers, to present, with their autographs, copies of their respective works for its Library.
8. Editors and publishers of newspapers, magazines and reviews, will confer a lasting favor on the Society, by contributing their publications regularly for its Library—or, at least, such numbers as may contain

articles bearing upon Iowa history, biography, geography, or antiquities; all of which will be carefully preserved for binding.

We respectfully request that all to whom this circular is addressed, will be disposed to give to our appeal a generous response. Donors to the Society's Library and Collections will be placed upon the list of exchanges, and receive equivalent publications of the Society, the issue of which will soon be commenced and regularly continued. It is very desirable that all donors should forward to the Corresponding Secretary, a specification of books, or articles donated and sent to the Society.⁷⁹

The report, resplendently confident, stated that a fine "harvest is confidently anticipated." Books, daguerreotypes, maps and charts, newspapers, and pamphlets had been secured by donation. Plans were being developed to secure portraits of prominent citizens and personal memoirs of early pioneers.⁸⁰

The *Second Biennial Report of the Executive Committee of the Iowa State Historical Society to the Governor and Eighth General Assembly* noted that some 1,400 volumes had been added to the library, in addition to manuscripts and pamphlets.⁸¹ The manuscript and pamphlet collection numbered about 1,000 items and included a letter of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The map collection included nearly every one published by the state, as well as earlier ones dating to 1630. The "picture gallery" contained only one portrait. It was, however, considered to be significant as it was a painting of George Washington by a "western artist." Portraits of the early governors had been promised. Finally, the riches of the "cabinet of curiosities" were enhanced and particular attention was given to recent acquisitions of Indian artifacts.⁸²

The third biennial report outlined steps taken for the exchange of state publications, not only with other states but with foreign countries as well. While textual and visual materials continued to increase, particular attention was given to the establishment of a "cabinet of natural history."⁸³

If the historical society was carefully gathering materials, the constitution of 1857, and subsequent laws, reinforced the 1846 laws concerning the maintenance of state records. The attorney general,⁸⁴ auditor of state,⁸⁵ governor,⁸⁶ secretary of state,⁸⁷ treasurer,⁸⁸ State Agricultural College and Farm,⁸⁹ State Bank,⁹⁰ State Historical Society,⁹¹ and Board of Education all had strict guidelines for the maintenance of records generated in the course of their daily function.⁹²

California (admitted to statehood 1849)

While the California Section of the California State Library was not established until 1903, the library's commitment to the state's history was

clear upon its organization in 1850. It was specifically created by the state legislature to support state government and preserve its history. Within a 25-year period, the library's book catalog grew from a single-page inventory listing several important California titles to a printed catalog with a Californiana section detailing more than 1,000 titles.⁹³ If the founding fathers of California saw the need for a library to assist them in their duties, the importance of maintaining an archives was also readily admitted. The first legislative act to become law in 1850 was the creation of an archives within the office of the secretary of state. It was charged with caring for records tracing the development of state government. Since 1849, it has maintained the records of the governors and secretaries of state.⁹⁴ The records documenting the State Assembly and Senate date from 1849. The records of the Supreme Court, including lower court transcripts on appeal, trial court and clerks' transcripts, and legal briefs and opinions, all of which trace the development of California's legal history from 1850 onward, have been preserved.⁹⁵

The Society of California Pioneers was organized in August 1850 with the express purpose of collecting and preserving all possible records and relics relating to California and the Pacific coast.⁹⁶ Among its goals was to collect and preserve information connected with the early settlement and conquest of the country.⁹⁷ The organization, in its early years, benefited from the generosity of some of California's earliest men of wealth, such as James Lick and W. D. M. Howard.⁹⁸ However, little is known of another early historical society, the "Historical Society of the State of California," incorporated on 29 April 1852. Regrettably, the society left no important account of its activities except for the record of its organization and incorporation.⁹⁹ The California Academy of Natural Sciences, founded in 1853, was dedicated to the history of lands bordering the Pacific Ocean. That organization's history can be traced through its minute books.¹⁰⁰

The desire for personal advancement was also evident with the establishment in San Francisco of the Mercantile Library Association, a "splendid new book establishment on Montgomery Street, lighted with gas."¹⁰¹ After one year of operation it boasted of a collection of more than 1,000 volumes in English, French, Spanish and German.¹⁰² The New England Society, founded in 1850, within a year had a library and reading room for members, featuring a rich collection of books, pamphlets, and newspapers from the Atlantic states.¹⁰³

Established shortly thereafter was the Sacramento Pioneer Association, founded on 25 January 1854 and incorporated on 31 March 1873 as the Sacramento Society of California Pioneers. Membership was

restricted to native Californians, foreigners, or citizens of the United States residing in California prior to 1 January 1850. The minutes books included the constitution and by-laws of 1854 and the organization's proceedings.¹⁰⁴

In southern California, an apparently ill-fated attempt was made in 1859 to establish a public library.¹⁰⁵ In 1872 agitation on behalf of a library was renewed. Finally, in 1874 that the state legislature approved a library for Los Angeles. In the interim years books were sold in Los Angeles by stores that handled a variety of goods or that conducted a limited loan library.¹⁰⁶ The establishment of such institutions must be seen as part of a greater movement of urban amenities, ranging from theaters to specialty stores. As was the case in other states, the development of historical societies was frequently associated with the rise of universities, and California was no exception. In 1853, the College of California was founded in Oakland. Not only were provisions made immediately for a library, but the secretary was charged with maintaining the university's records.¹⁰⁷

The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 testified to the development of libraries, public and private, all of which suffered tremendous losses. The library of the Society of Pioneers lost some of its greatest treasures. The destruction of fine libraries was reported by contemporary writers to be the most regretted loss. The only library to survive was the Bancroft collection, which was actually in storage. The original collection was founded in 1860 by Hubert Howe Bancroft, to whom all roads in California research eventually lead.¹⁰⁸

Minnesota (admitted to statehood 1858)

The Minnesota Historical Society can trace its active life to 1850. General William G. LeDuc, one of the few original members then surviving, recalled in 1901 that it was always surmised that Charles K. Smith, secretary of the Minnesota Territory, was active in the development of the historical society because of the importance attached to collecting historical materials of his native state, Ohio. Smith did appear to be influenced by Caleb Atwater, who devoted much time to the local history of Ohio.

The Minnesota Historical Society was founded in a St. Paul log tavern, where the act of incorporation was prepared. The legislative bill establishing the society was the fifth act of the Minnesota Territory, which had been established on 3 March 1849. The legislative action prompted James Watson Webb to write in his *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, "There is nothing too flattering to predict of the future greatness

and prosperity of a people who commence to write their history as soon as the foundations of their commonwealth are laid."¹⁰⁹ Mary Wheelhouse Berthel and Harold Dean Carter in outlining the development of the organization noted that the society's establishment followed "civil organization of the state more quickly than any other historical society in the nation."¹¹⁰ The governor approved the society on 20 October 1849 and it was formally organized on 15 November 1849.¹¹¹

On 1 January 1850 the young organization held its first meeting. An address was delivered to the membership by the Reverend Edward Duffield Neil on the "French Voyagers to Minnesota during the Seventeenth Century." The constitution and by-laws were adopted during the business session. At that initial meeting, 122 individuals were listed as resident members. The influence of the society was soon felt on a national level when it underwrote the publication by the Smithsonian Institution in 1851 of the *Dakota Lexicon*, a grammar and dictionary of the Dakota (or Sioux) language.¹¹²

While perhaps much of the initial organization can be credited to Charles K. Smith, the growth of the library and museum, and their reputations, can be attributed to the previously mentioned Neil. Holding a variety of positions of local and national importance, for more than forty years he contributed to the development of the Minnesota Historical Society.¹¹³ Another important early figure was Daniel A. Robertson, also a native of Ohio. A strong fundraiser, he devoted his energies to the completion of a fireproof building for the young society's collections. Financial reversals during 1857 caused building delays, and the state legislature failed to make any additional appropriations. The young organization eventually was forced to find rather humble quarters.¹¹⁴

The mission of the society was initially "the collection and preservation of a library, mineralogical and geological specimens, Indian curiosities, and other matters and things connected with, and calculated to illustrate and perpetuate the history and settlement of said Territory."¹¹⁵ Six years later, additional duties were assigned to the society; it was "to cultivate among the citizens thereof a knowledge of the useful and liberal arts, science and literature."¹¹⁶

The state legislature realized if more activity was to be expected from the organization, additional assistance would be necessary. To that end, an annual appropriation was voted to assist the society. In essence, legislators realized that the study of history was indispensable for the success of the state.¹¹⁷ The 1857 constitution stated that if the seat of government should be moved from St. Paul, the "capitol building and grounds shall be dedicated to an institution for the promotion of science,

literature and the arts, to be organized by the legislature of the State, and of which institution the Minnesota Historical Society shall always be a department.¹¹⁸

The society took seriously the publication of relevant materials during the antebellum period. From 1850 to 1856 five publications were issued. Four of them are the *Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society*, the first volume of which, issued in 1850, bears the distinction of being the first book published in Minnesota.¹¹⁹ The *Annals* contained both annual reports and articles ranging from the destiny and language of Indians to the geography of Minnesota. In 1856, *Materials for the Future History of Minnesota: Being a Report of the Minnesota Historical Society to the Legislative Assembly* was published. Some 1,500 copies were printed "for the use of the legislature." With the exception of this 1856 publication, the volumes were printed in very small numbers. By 1872 the demand for complete sets of those early publications had grown so great that a reprint was undertaken.¹²⁰

If publications were an important part of the organization's activities, so were lectures. Eighteen topics were presented for future lectures at the 15 January 1856 annual meeting. The topics concerned Indian heritage, local geology, ornithology of the Northwest, and a "Civil and Statistical History of the Northwest."¹²¹ The antebellum years of the society, while full of youthful enthusiasm, were not without moments of uncertainty. Indeed, during the financially difficult years of 1857-1865, it nearly died. After the Civil War, it gained a new life and soon the library had 1,155 bound volumes. The holdings grew, in spite of a disastrous fire in 1881, and by 1888 a catalog was published.¹²²

Perhaps the best summary of the activity of the Minnesota Historical Society can be found in the words of the Alexander Ramsey, governor in the early years of the society, who in an address to its annual meeting in 1896, remarked:

This Society is here for the service of the State, as it has been in the past and shall be in the future. Its history is gathered in our Library from year to year, from week to week, and day by day. Its doors are open free to all, and its custodians welcome all who seek to drink at its fountains.¹²³

Attention must be given to the fact that the government took steps to care for the preservation of its own records from the beginning. When a disastrous fire struck the new state capitol in 1881, it was fortunate that most records were salvaged.¹²⁴ Religious archives have also been well maintained. Dating the from antebellum period is the archives of St. John's

University in Collegeville. Incorporated in 1857, the archives includes personal papers of the Benedictine Fathers, as well as correspondence and financial records of the institution.¹²⁵ The Northfield Lyceum, organized ca. 1856, continues to this day through the activities of its successor, the Northfield Public Library. Early Lyceum records indicate that in 1856 the citizens united to create the library and collected \$580 for the construction of a new building. When the building opened on 3 February 1858, the inventory counted a total of 269 volumes.¹²⁶

It should be noted that book collecting preceded the Historical Society. Individuals such as Edmund F. Ely, a missionary, considered books among his prized possessions. Ely, like other missionaries, frequently wrote letters inquiring about the availability of needed books, especially atlases. Fur traders, so often thought of as men of adventure, wrote friends to secure for them a wide variety of books from those of a religious nature to natural history publications.¹²⁷ Indeed, it was not uncommon to find a fur trader requesting a biography of Napoleon along with a horse saddle.¹²⁸

Oregon (admitted to statehood 1859)

Life in early Oregon, like other western states, was defined to a large degree by its climate, vast amounts of open space, rural environment, and an "intimate relation with the land."¹²⁹ While men did struggle against hardships, they also enjoyed books. Indeed, the relation of the Oregon pioneers to books can be traced to the very emigrant societies formed to attract residents to Oregon. Devoted to diffusing information about Oregon, these societies date to the 1820s.¹³⁰ Guidebooks read at their meetings detailed recommended supplies and ammunition, stated the advantages of oxen and of travel in small groups, and noted distances between points, resources, and possibilities for development.¹³¹ Readers were warned specifically that books could easily be damaged during the difficult trip to Oregon.¹³²

The history of the book in Oregon is linked to those early pioneers. In addition to the Bible and other religious works, books known to have been read en route to Oregon included Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Lewis and Clark's *Journal*, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie*, and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. One of the earliest governmental activities in Oregon involved a pioneer's books. When one Ewing Young died intestate in 1841, there was no law or precedent to settle his estate. His library, of more than 11 volumes, was sold. The only identified titles were two volumes of Shakespeare.¹³³

The library of James O'Neal, another pioneer, figures in the history of the provisional government. The government purchased in 1843 from him a copy of "the Laws of Iowa, a Guide to Judge's and Jefferson's Manual." Oregon's first state library, preceding the territorial library created by the United States Congress in 1848, began with that purchase. The role of books in the formation of law was evident in the passage of the "currency law" of 1845. By that legislation, certain personal property could not be sold to satisfy judgments. Included in that category was the Bible and all books "of private libraries not to exceed one hundred dollars worth."¹³⁴

In March 1853 the British ship *Josephine* arrived in the Columbia River with a case of books for J. G. King, agent at Fort Umpqua for the Hudson's Bay Company. King carefully selected his library and spent about one hundred dollars on it. It included works on navigation, English literature, poetry, a world atlas, reference works, and a guidebook to England and Wales.¹³⁵ Archibald McKinlay, another pioneer book collector, had his library gathered for him in Boston. McKinlay, like King, was willing to spend about \$100 on his library. However, unlike King, he did not specify books to be purchased.¹³⁶

Life in the rugged forts was made more bearable by individuals such as William F. Tolmie, who brought books to start a circulating library.¹³⁷ The value attached to books is seen in the establishment of the Pioneer Lyceum and Literary Club of Willamette Falls in the winter of 1842-1843.¹³⁸ The second corporation authorized by the legislature of Oregon's provisional government was the Multnomah Circulating Library (1845), also located in Willamette Falls.¹³⁹ The establishment of a circulating library in Oregon City in 1844 and of a library group in Portland in 1850 reaffirmed the importance of books among the pioneers.¹⁴⁰ *The Constitution, By-Laws, and Charter of the Albany Library and Literary Institute*, founded in 1857, survives and provides an insight into the minds of its organizers. The organization was founded for self-improvement, and the constitution provided specifically for a librarian to "keep a faithful record of all books."¹⁴¹ On a similar note, in 1853, the farmers of Yamhill County met to discuss the organization of an agricultural society and the formation of a library.¹⁴²

The Oregon Territorial Library was one of the first orders of business for the legislature, which in 1849 authorized the purchase of two thousand dollars in books. In 1852, some \$3,000 was obtained from the United States Treasury Department to purchase books and maps, which were placed in "a room fitted up for the purpose in Oregon City." The library grew quickly and by 1855 had 1,750 volumes. Fire struck the

following year and destroyed it. Yet, by 1860 the library was well on the way to recovery.¹⁴³

In 1853 the Legislative Assembly of the Oregon Territory signaled the importance of preserving the historical record when it ordered the publication of the public papers documenting the earliest attempts to establish government in the Oregon country from 1841 to 1843. The documents were published as *The Oregon Archives, including the Journals, Governor's Messages and Public Papers of Oregon*. While the inadequacies of that publication can quickly be noted, it represents a significant attempt to preserve historical documents.¹⁴⁴

Efforts of individuals such as Samuel Royal Thurston, the first delegate to Congress from the Oregon Territory, are worthy of mention. An entry in his diary for 13 December 1849 notes that he went to the United States Capitol to seek out appropriate documents relative to Oregon for the specific purpose of obtaining them and returning them to Oregon. On 13 February 1850, he was again fighting on behalf of documents and succeeded in securing a copy of important scientific surveys for the Oregon Territorial Library.¹⁴⁵

While Thurston was busy gathering documents, Harvey W. Scott was beginning to assemble what would eventually become one of the largest private libraries in the western United States. The Peoria, Illinois, native moved to Oregon in 1852. His interest in book collecting was manifested at an early age. Eventually, his library would contain, according to biographer and associate Charles H. Chapman, every important historical work.¹⁴⁶

The Oregon Constitution specifically addressed the question of archives rather simply: "The Secretary of State shall keep a fair record of the official acts of the legislative assembly and executive department of the state, and shall, when required, all the same and all matters relative thereto before either branch of the legislative assembly." Further clarification stated that "all legal papers of the state shall be deposited and preserved in his [the secretary's] office."¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

The development of each state's historical consciousness is a reflection of its history, but there are several common threads binding the trans-Mississippi antebellum states. Historical societies were not created in a vacuum. They were preceded by the development of individuals' libraries that reflect the taste and interests of many an early pioneer. They developed as other cultural and educational organizations were emerging.

Efforts were made to protect archives in time of war; however, the Civil War did take its toll on early collections of books and manuscripts. The passage of early laws in various states indicates a respect for books and documents. During the antebellum period, the formal gathering of primary and secondary materials for the study of local history was minimal in several states. However, libraries and reading habits indicated a healthy respect and concern for the history of those same states. Such concern created a hospitable environment for the establishment and maintenance of repositories devoted to state history.

When organized, these state historical societies enjoyed a relation with the state's capital city, capitol building, or state university. They encouraged the exchange of publications with sister institutions and acceptance of newspapers and books as a means of enlarging their holdings. Documenting the pioneer life was a source of motivation, just as the Revolutionary War had inspired the original thirteen states and the proud patriotism of the Battle of New Orleans proved fertile soil for the Louisiana Historical Society. If they readily recognized their European connections, these societies also admitted the importance of Native American history.¹⁴⁸

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125. *Guide to Depositories of Manuscript Collections in the United States: Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Records Survey Project, 1941), p. 4.
126. Theodore C. Blegen, "Pioneer Bookshelves and Modern Libraries," *Minnesota History* 22 (1941): 359-360.
127. Blegen, "Pioneer Bookshelves," pp. 352-355.

128. Blegan, "Pioneer Bookshelves," pp. 352-355.
129. Joseph Kinsey Howard, "Culture, Climate, and Community," in V. L. O. Chittick, ed., *Northwest Harvest* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 115.
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131. Helen B. Knoll, "The Books that Enlightened the Emigrants," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 45 (1944): 105-109.
132. James W. Manning, "Literacy on the Oregon Trail," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 41 (1940): 190.
133. Manning, "Literacy on the Oregon Trail," p. 193.
134. Manning, "Literacy on the Oregon Trail," p. 193.
135. J. Orin Oliphant, "The Library of a Fur Trader at Fort Umpqua," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 54 (1953): 28-29.
136. Oliphant, "Library of a Fur Trader," p. 27.
137. Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 153.
138. Charles H. Carey, *A General History of Oregon, Prior to 1861* (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1935), vol. 1, pp. 324-325.
139. Carey, *General History*, vol. 2, pp. 720-721.
140. Carey, *General History*, p. 357.
141. (Salem, Oregon Territory: Advocate Office, 1857).
142. George H. Himes, "History of Organization of Oregon State Agricultural Society," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 8 (1907): 317.
143. F. G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 9 (1907): 141-143.
144. David C. Duniway and Neil R. Riggs, editors, "The Oregon Archives, 1841-1843," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 60 (1959): 211.
145. George H. Himes, "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 15 (1914): 3, 164, 188.

146. Charles H. Chapman, "Mr. Scott's Extensive Library as a Guage [sic] of his Broad Scholarship and Literary Activity," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 15 (1913): 133-134.

147. F. G. Young, "The Archives of Oregon," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 3 (1902): 371-372.

148. Although Kansas and New Mexico were not admitted to statehood before 1861 and therefore are not included in this study, Leslie H. Fishel, jr., in his essay on Wisconsin (see above, pp. 170-171) indicates that there was a historical society in each of those territories before statehood. Any extensive research in antebellum historical activity ought to include a scanning of the Lyman C. Draper papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for correspondence from other states and territories.

II

*Proceedings of the Awards Banquet
of the
North Caroliniana Society
Honoring the Sesquicentennial
of the
North Carolina Collection
21 May 1994*



THE NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD RECIPIENTS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1978 Paul Green | 1987 David Stick |
| 1979 Albert Coates | 1988 William McWhorter Cochrane |
| 1980 Sam J. Ervin, Jr. | 1989 Emma Neal Morrison |
| 1981 Sam Ragan | 1990 Burke Davis |
| 1982 Gertrude Sprague Carraway | 1991 Lawrence F. London |
| 1983 John Fries Blair | 1992 Frank H. Kenan |
| 1984 William C. & Ida H. Friday | 1993 Charles Kuralt |
| 1985 William S. Powell | 1994 North Carolina Collection |
| 1986 Mary D.B.T. & James H. Semans | 1994 Archie K. Davis |
| | 1994 H. G. Jones |

Sesquicentennial Banquet: The North Carolina Collection, 1844-1994

[The North Caroliniana Society on 21 May 1994 devoted its annual banquet at the Carolina Inn to the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the founding in 1844 of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, the origin of the North Carolina Collection. As is its custom, the society publishes the proceedings of the banquet, which was held in conjunction with the national conference titled "For History's Sake: State Historical Collections in the Early Republic." Master of ceremonies was H. G. Jones, former curator and now part-time Thomas Whitmell Davis research historian in the collection and secretary-treasurer of the society. The main address of the evening, by Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard, has been included in the essays published earlier in this volume (see pp. 92-101).]

Introductions and Opening Remarks

H. G. Jones

Commemorations take a variety of forms. Some turn into political spectacles with glad-handing candidates frantically trying to think of some historical justification for their election. Some emphasize "celebration" and feature newly-sprung beards, period clothing, costume balls, and street dances. The sesquicentennial of the North Carolina Collection, we believed, should reflect the character of the collection itself in a solemn, dignified commemoration designed to emphasize the importance of documentary and literary preservation in the life of our nation. So, we have just concluded a two-day national conference at which leaders of the historical and museums professions described the laying of foundations of historical consciousness in America, beginning in 1791 with the first state historical society in Massachusetts, a state that we honored with a dinner last night. In daytime sessions, we heard about stirrings and beginnings, some of them abortive, in other states. We expect the ten essays, when published in book form, to provide a foundation—a primer—upon which

later conferences at other institutions can carry the story into the era of professional history leading to the thousands of historical societies that conduct the work throughout the United States today.

Before we begin our dinner, may I recognize those at the head table. Will each stand and remain standing as names are called, and will the audience withhold applause until all have been recognized: From my far right, Bob Anthony, acting curator of the North Carolina Collection; Susan Nutter, librarian at our sister institution, North Carolina State University; our chancellor, Paul Hardin; Chapel Hill's first lady, Ida Friday; the speaker of the evening, Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard; and, from my far left, the associate provost for university libraries, Joe A. Hewitt; the university's first lady, Barbara Hardin; the president of the North Caroliniana Society, William Friday; and the presiding judge in the Whichard household, Leona Whichard.

We are met tonight to honor a very special group of people—those who over the past 150 years by their own minds, hearts, hands, and gifts have built a state treasure. First, I want to present each member of the current staff of the North Carolina Collection. Will each please stand and remain standing as I call the names, and will the audience withhold applause until all have been presented: In alphabetical order, John Ansley, Bob Anthony, Lula Avent, Alice Cotten, Jerry Cotten, Pam Cross, Neil Fulghum, Keith Longiotti, Eileen McGrath, Harry McKown, Lydia Petersen, Fred Stipe, and John Williams. One staff member, Jeff Hicks, could not be with us. These are the people who will lead the Collection into its fourth half-century.

Many of those to whom we owe so much, like Mary Lindsay Thornton, are no longer with us, but we are delighted to welcome back a number of former staff members and student assistants. One of them never left us, for he is not only our most persistent researcher and prolific author but also has been a tower of strength to me during the past twenty years as an advisor and friend. Will former curator William S. Powell stand and remain standing while all others who have previously worked in the collection either as regular staff or as student assistants join him in standing. You share in the award that will be made later in the evening. Thank you for your contributions to the collection.

If any of you have not already viewed the fine exhibition on the history of the collection mounted by Neil Fulghum in the main floor hallway of Wilson Library, please plan to go by and see it. You will find a lot of familiar faces in it, perhaps your own. The exhibition will be up for at least the remainder of the year.

Finally, we must note with deep regret the absence of our beloved

president emeritus of the North Caroliniana Society and wonderful supporter of the North Carolina Collection—and of course the entire university and state—Archie K. Davis, whose health would not permit him to travel back to the campus that he loves so dearly. Archie, we all miss you, and that includes your friend Len Tucker, who reminded me today that you are the only North Carolinian on the roll of elected members of the Massachusetts Historical Society. We are recording these proceedings for you, Archie, and we know that you and Mary Louise are with us in spirit.

[Following dinner, the master of ceremonies continued:]

If we need a bit of context for our commemoration of an important cultural development 150 years ago, we might remember that in 1844 the Constitution of the United States was only 55 years old and this first state university in the nation had been open only 49 years. Just four years earlier North Carolina had opened its first public school, its first railroads, and its new state capitol building. A graduate of this university, James K. Polk, was the Democratic nominee for president of the United States in 1844, but his fellow North Carolinians voted instead for a Kentuckian, Henry Clay. Slaves made up nearly a third of the population of North Carolina, though only about one white family in four owned any. Only five years after its invention in France, a daguerreotype processor was in operation by C. Doratt in nearby Raleigh. The Orange County seat, Hillsborough, had grown to about a thousand people, so large that William J. Bingham resigned his headship of the Hillsborough Academy and built, twelve miles west of Chapel Hill, the Bingham School so that he could educate his own sons "in the country." Some of you may be spending the night in that school, now a bed-and-breakfast.

North Carolina was still a backward state, mockingly called, by citizens of other states, the "Rip Van Winkle State of the Union." It was Judge and Governor David L. Swain's embarrassed confirmation of the accuracy of that appellation that gave him the determination to bolster the self-esteem of his fellow Tar Heels by doing what Massachusetts had done in 1791—i.e., establish a historical collection that could become a repository of the literary and cultural heritage of the state. We commemorate that act of statesmanship tonight.

An associate justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina deserves a dignified introduction. Particularly if he is the eighty-second person to serve on the court but the only one to have been elected to both houses of the General Assembly and both of the state's appellate courts

and, for good measure, managed a campaign for president of the United States. But some of us are old enough to have known "Bill" Whichard in his youth, and there is something intensely personal in witnessing the growth of a young man into maturity and then into leadership in our state. I share the pride of many of you in the audience who have seen this transformation.

The son of school teachers and a product of those schools and with two degrees from this university, Bill Whichard in 1966 established law practice in Durham and just four years later—at age thirty—was elected to the State House of Representatives. By then I was director of the State Department of Archives and History, and with one state historic site—Bennett Place—already in operation in Durham County and another—Duke Homestead—under negotiation, I expected and received Representative Whichard's support in connection with the preservation of historic properties. I soon learned, however, that his interest was far broader than old buildings, battlefields, and anniversaries, for he understood that the central responsibility of an archival and historical agency is the less glamorous but absolutely essential task of preserving and promoting the use of our documentary and literary resources. Throughout his four years as a house delegate and the next six years as a senator, Bill Whichard was an eloquent spokesman for history and a tried and true friend of the cultural agencies of the state, particularly the Department of Archives and History.

Thus for his leadership as a legislator, Justice Whichard is due deep appreciation from those of us who have made a career in this field. But more than that, he is a practitioner of history, a prodigious researcher, and a writer. On rare week days when he can escape the court's heavy docket, and particularly on Saturday, he can be found in the State Archives or the North Carolina or Southern Historical Collection, and it is not at all unusual to see him in the North Carolina Collection's Reading Room on Sunday afternoons. Not satisfied with a normal law degree, Justice Whichard enrolled in the University of Virginia Law School and in 1984 received a master of law degree in judicial process. More recently, he has applied himself to a consuming project—the preparation of a biography of James Iredell, associate justice of the United States Supreme Court in George Washington's administration. That monumental work has been defended before the faculty at UVA, and, believe it or not, he will leave us after his address tonight to drive to Charlottesville, where tomorrow he will accept the degree of doctor of juridical science.

He is our speaker tonight because of his enthusiastic interest in and support of the North Carolina Collection and other repositories of our state's patrimony. When President Archie K. Davis established a

committee of the North Caroliniana Society to study the status of the North Carolina Collection and the society's relationship to it, he looked no farther than Justice Whichard for its chairman. His committee, with members Nancy Lilly, Gary Barefoot, and Bill Powell, has met often and long during the past fifteen months, and its report, which we believe can inaugurate a new surge of energy within the library and the collection, was endorsed by the Board of Directors at its meeting this afternoon and will be printed in our annual report for 1993-1994.

The Honorable Justice—and, tomorrow, Doctor Justice—Willis P. Whichard.

[Following Justice Whichard's address, which is printed on pages 92-101, the master of ceremonies continued:]

With us are representatives from fifteen states who registered for the national conference on state historical collections. We welcome them all, but I'd especially like to ask our speakers to stand and remain standing as I call their names. Charles F. Bryan, Jr., director of the Virginia Historical Society, is in the air on his way to China after delivering his paper yesterday, and Susan Stitt, president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is having a reunion tonight with two brothers. Still with us, however, are Louis Leonard Tucker, director of the Massachusetts Historical Society; Clement M. Silvestro, director emeritus of the Museum of Our National Heritage; James J. Heslin, director emeritus of the New-York Historical Society; Richard J. Cox, of the University of Pittsburgh, editor of *The American Archivist*; Philip P. Mason, distinguished professor of history at Wayne State University; Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., president emeritus of Heidelberg College; and Alfred Lemmon, curator of manuscripts at the Historic New Orleans Collection. Thank you all for sharing this evening with us.

Our visitors should understand that in North Carolina no name—not even Michael Jordan's—is as familiar to our 6.5 million citizens as that of the president of the William Rand Kenan Fund, president emeritus of the University of North Carolina, and president of our North Caroliniana Society. So he never needs an introduction to a Tar Heel audience. As he comes forward, I wish to present to him, as a gift to the North Caroliniana Society to be preserved in the North Carolina Collection Gallery, a pine gavel with a bronze label containing the presidential seal of the United States and reading, "Original White House Material Removed in 1950." The two pieces of wood from which the gavel was turned were installed in 1817 and removed during President Truman's

reconstruction of the interior of the White House. As an admirer of Harry Truman, I acquired the pieces forty-four years ago and had a friend turn them into this gavel which, with its intrinsic historicity, I hope will serve the society for at least forty-four more years. President William Friday.

Presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1994

William C. Friday

H. G., on behalf of the North Caroliniana Society, I accept this historic gavel made from wood that helped hold up the White House during its occupation by twenty-eight presidents of the United States from James Monroe to Harry Truman. If this wood could only talk!

The North Caroliniana Society award has been presented sixteen times, always to an individual, from Paul Green to Charles Kuralt. After consultation with and endorsement by Archie Davis, the society's beloved president emeritus, our Board of Directors unanimously voted to make an exception this year by presenting the award to the North Carolina Collection on behalf of its current and former staff members, student assistants, donors, and friends in recognition of the enormous contributions made by the collection in the preservation of our state's literary and historical resources.

As our members will recall, the sterling silver award cup, which sits directly in front of me, was found and converted to its present use by John and Ann Sanders. It originally connected the Jeffersons of Virginia and the Coolidges of New England and thus is an intrinsically historic artifact in itself. The name of the annual recipient of the award is engraved on a silver plate resting around the wooden base, and the ensemble, together with a floor pedestal, adorns the Reading Room of the North Carolina Collection.

Emblematic of the simple dignity of the North Carolina Collection itself, a sterling silver goblet, engraved with just the name of the award and recipient plus the year, is given to the winner. This one will be preserved in the North Carolina Collection as a reminder of David L. Swain, Kemp P. Battle, Louis Round Wilson, and the twentieth-century curators and staff who have continued Swain's mission for a century and a half. They, though, share this recognition with John Sprunt Hill, Bruce Cotten, Archie K. Davis, the family of Thomas Wolfe, and thousands of other donors who

have supplemented state funds by their private contributions of money and materials. We are reminded that the building in which we meet, the Carolina Inn, was given to the university by John Sprunt Hill on condition that its income beyond expenses be devoted to the North Carolina Collection. We all pray that the financial condition of the Inn will be improved after its major renovation so that substantial sums can again be devoted to the acquisition and management of North Caroliniana.

Because this award recognizes the contributions of so many staff members, student assistants, donors, and friends over the past century and a half, we have asked Chancellor Paul Hardin to receive it on their behalf. Paul, will you accept this goblet for permanent preservation in the North Carolina Collection.

Acceptance of the Award

Paul Hardin

If ever I played a role that is *ex officio*, it is tonight, because I am one of only about half of this audience who never served on the staff of the North Carolina Collection. But I think I know how I got this assignment. I can imagine Bill Friday and H. G. Jones pondering, "How can we pick one person to represent all the committed, talented, personally engaging, and cooperative people who have nurtured the North Carolina Collection?" The answer was obvious. "Paul Hardin is chancellor, and he will go anywhere where North Carolinians gather, especially if there is a meal involved. And he will bring along Barbara to grace the head table."

So here I am, and how honored I am to have been asked to participate in this sesquicentennial banquet of the North Caroliniana Society and the privilege of accepting this award. By coincidence, within the last three weeks I have taken personal advantage of the North Carolina Collection twice with the splendid help of Alice Cotten and Bob Anthony. Thus my appreciation is both *ex officio* and first-hand. On the earlier occasion, I was preparing to greet the Thomas Wolfe Society, and one does not do that without browsing a bit in the Thomas Wolfe Collection; and on the second occasion I was going to the bicentennial blitz at Edenton, and I learned that James Iredell, who married Hannah Johnston, the sister of Samuel Johnston, once borrowed a volume of Blackstone's *Commentaries* from Johnston's Hayes Plantation Library, which we are gradually moving from Edenton to the North Carolina Collection Gallery. Iredell not only returned the borrowed book but later gave another volume to complete his

brother-in-law's "sett."

We hear superlatives about the North Carolina Collection, the largest and best of its kind, but what makes it such a treasure to those of us here tonight is not its size but its subject matter. It is all about North Carolina, and we all love this state; we are bound to it by habit, hope, and helpless affection. We live here, we work here, we try to grow here, and we hope to be worthy of the heritage that is housed here and made gloriously accessible by our wonderful staff.

So, President Friday, with fierce pride and even a lump in my throat, I accept, on behalf of the collection's staff—past, present, and future—the 1994 North Caroliniana Society Award, given in the collection's sesquicentennial year and the university's bicentennial year. As I accept the award, I join the society in expressing to each member of that great staff our profound thanks for their invaluable service to our university, to our state, and to the preservation of useful knowledge about the state of North Carolina.

[President Friday, after thanking Chancellor Hardin, reported that the Board of Directors had made an exception to the usual policy of presenting only one award for the year by directing two additional awards for this occasion. He introduced Vice-President William S. Powell for the another presentation.]

Presentation of Award to H. G. Jones

William S. Powell

H. G. Jones is a busy, effective worker on behalf of North Carolina history and literature, and he has made his presence felt in many related fields, especially those pertaining to the preservation, publication, use, and appreciation of sources and artifacts of our historical heritage. His name will long be associated with the State Department of Archives and History for the many innovative programs he began there and with the North Carolina Collection for programs he began here, for his professional leadership, and for planning such excellent new quarters, but above all for creating the North Caroliniana Society.

While public service has been his life's work, modesty is one of his primary traits. When the Board of Directors of the North Caroliniana Society wanted to honor him publicly at the time of his retirement as curator of the North Carolina Collection, he balked. It has taken us all this time to devise a way to circumvent his firm declaration that he wanted

no recognition.

The board, without his knowledge even to this moment, concluded that the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the North Carolina Collection, when he might be away from the lectern for a brief time, presented that opportunity. In seeking an appropriate title by which to address him and that would be recognized in this state by not only members of the historical community but by practically everybody in North Carolina, I looked up the title "The Honorable" in the dictionary as well as in Emily Post's etiquette book. This title is quite exclusive, and it is to be used advisedly. Only a restricted list of incumbent officials may properly be addressed by that distinctive title. In this case, with the presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award to H. G. Jones, we honor him, and I hereby declare that in the opinion of the board and of thousands of grateful North Carolinians, H. G. Jones is most worthy of the title "The Honorable." We are disappointed that the award is not yet engraved; that is because H. G. has kept the goblets so secretly hidden that we couldn't find them until today.

[President Friday explained that the reason the officers had not gone out and purchased another goblet was that Jones kept the checkbook hidden. He also announced that the H. G. Jones North Carolina Heritage Fund for the benefit of the North Carolina Collection had, on this day, gone over \$50,000.00. He then introduced John L. Sanders, a member of the Board of Directors].

Presentation of Award to Archie K. Davis

John L. Sanders

Somewhere in North Carolina there might be an audience to which Archie Davis would need an introduction, but this is not it. The members of the North Caroliniana Society have known Archie for periods ranging from a few years to many decades. You know that no living North Carolinian has contributed more variously, more constructively, and more unselfishly to the economic, social, and cultural upbuilding of our state than has our friend Archie Davis.

Other more appropriate organizations have lauded Archie's high achievements as a banker, businessman, public servant, educational leader, and philanthropist. This society will confine its praise to his achievements in the service of his earliest and most enduring love: the study, writing, and advocacy of history. He was a founding member of the North

Caroliniana Society and for eleven years (1981 to 1992) served as its president. He was the major force in achieving the financial security the society enjoys today, and he did it through his own generous contributions, the donations he obtained from others, and the major gift made to the society in his honor by the Research Triangle Foundation.

In recognition and appreciation of his devoted and effective leadership of this society, of his valuable services to many other historical organizations, and not less of his warm friendship and genial companionship over so many years, the North Caroliniana Society confers upon Archibald Kimbrough Davis a North Caroliniana Society Award for 1994.

[President Friday expressed regret that Archie Davis could not be present to accept the award, but he noted that the proceedings were being recorded, and he sent this message: "Archie and Mary Louise, this hall is full of your friends, whose applause has expressed their love for you and our profound gratitude for all that you have meant to North Carolina over all these years. God bless you."

President Friday then announced that at the annual meeting in the afternoon Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard had been elected president of the society for the coming year, and he called Justice Whichard forward to accept the gavel. President Whichard thanked Bill Friday not only for his service to the society but also for his lifetime of service to North Carolina. He then introduced Joe A. Hewitt, associate university provost for libraries, for an announcement.]

Appointment of New Curator

Joe A. Hewitt

Briefly, before getting to my major announcement, I want to take this opportunity to thank the society, on behalf of the university and the Academic Affairs Library, for its extraordinary support of the North Carolina Collection. This is a remarkable organization and a remarkable relationship between two organizations, and I know of no other quite like it. It is a perfect example of the excellence in public service that can be achieved through a public institution that enjoys such dedicated private support. Again, I thank you and promise that we will do everything we can to deserve your continued support.

I want everyone to know how pleased I am to be able to be making the announcement I am about to make, and to be able to do so on such a

fitting occasion.

When H. G. informed me last fall that he planned to retire as curator at the end of December, I went into a state of panic. Naturally I had expected that this would happen some day, but when it actually did happen, I was not prepared for it—I was not prepared even to imagine the North Carolina Collection without Dr. Jones as curator.

So I appointed a search committee as quickly as possible, not only to search for a successor to Dr. Jones, but also to help us visualize the future for the North Carolina Collection under a new curator. The search committee was made up of library staff, principally from the special collections, and faculty.

The committee had a very difficult charge. I asked that they conduct a national search to find the best possible successor to Dr. Jones. This would have to be—

§someone knowledgeable about the history of North Carolina and its literature and culture, particularly its print culture;

§someone who could lead a highly qualified staff and manage a complex technical and service operation;

§someone who is known and respected in historical, archival, and cultural circles in the state;

§someone who would continue the traditions of the collection and build on its strengths, and at the same time explore new directions in response to new approaches to historical scholarship and the changing needs of citizens of the state.

In selecting such a person, the committee was asked to consult widely in the university community and among the users of the collection. The committee did an extraordinarily thorough and thoughtful job in completing its work.

I would like to thank the chair of the committee, Tim West, of the Southern Historical Collection, and library staff members Alice Cotten, Charles McNamara, Pat Langelier, and Fred Stipe, and especially the faculty members, Laurence Avery of the English Department and Jim Leloudis of the History Department. This committee worked very hard and came out with an excellent result.

The position of curator of the North Carolina Collection is the preeminent position of its kind in the country associated with a university. It was a very competitive field. I was surprised at the number of qualified candidates, persons with North Carolina roots and with backgrounds in North Carolina history, now serving as curators in other states, who were interested in this position. Some states are proud to be known as the "cradle of coaches"; I think North Carolina might well be able to make a claim to the title "cradle of curators."

After searching very far afield indeed, the very best candidate to

JOE A. HEWITT

succeed Dr. Jones was found right here at home, already in the collection. This is a person that I'm sure most of you know, the current acting curator and previously the collection development librarian for the North Carolina Collection, Robert G. Anthony, Jr. Bob's name has been put forward for approval by the Board of Governors for the position of curator of the North Carolina Collection.

Bob has the overwhelming endorsement of the search committee and all who were involved in the search process. Having been involved in a number of such searches, I can say that very few result in decisions that are quite so emphatic.

I won't go through all of Bob's qualifications for the position tonight, but I do want to mention that he is a native of North Carolina from Hobgood in Halifax County. He has a B.A. from Wake Forest, a master's degree from Carolina, and a wide range of additional professional training from a variety of institutions, including North Carolina State University. He has been the chief collection development officer in the North Carolina Collection since 1986. Previously he was manager of the Carolina Room at the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Public Library, a reference librarian in the North Carolina Collection, and an archivist in the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

He has an impressive record of service to statewide and local organizations relating to archives, libraries, history, and historic preservation. He is a frequent speaker to these groups and contributor to their publications. His annual "North Carolina Bibliography" in the *North Carolina Historical Review*, which he has done now for ten years, is an indispensable contribution to the bibliographic record of printed materials relating to the state.

Bob's competence is unquestioned. He also has a progressive vision for the future of the collection and its services. But the qualities that make him so perfectly suited for the position are the same qualities that so distinguished his predecessors as curator—his *integrity* and his *commitment* to the service mission of the collection. I'm sure that under Bob Anthony, the collection will get off to an excellent start on its next 150 years.

So let us welcome Bob as the new curator and show him our enthusiastic support.

[President Whichard invited the audience to return in the year 2044 for the bicentennial of the North Carolina Collection, and he adjourned the meeting with a standing ovation for the new curator and staff of the North Carolina Collection.]

III

*Photographs Taken during the
Conference on State Historical
Collections and the
Sesquicentennial Banquet
for the
North Carolina Collection*



Top: Louis Leonard Tucker; Susan Stitt, Charles F. Bryan, Jr. Bottom: Richard J. Cox, Philip P. Mason, Leslie H. Fishel, Jr.



Top: Alfred E. Lemmon, Willis P. Whichard, H. G. Jones (conference coordinator). Bottom: Philip P. Mason and Clement M. Silvestro.



Top: Clement M. Silvestro and James J. Heslin. Bottom: Marcia and Philip P. Mason, Charles F. Bryan, Jr., and Susan Stitt.



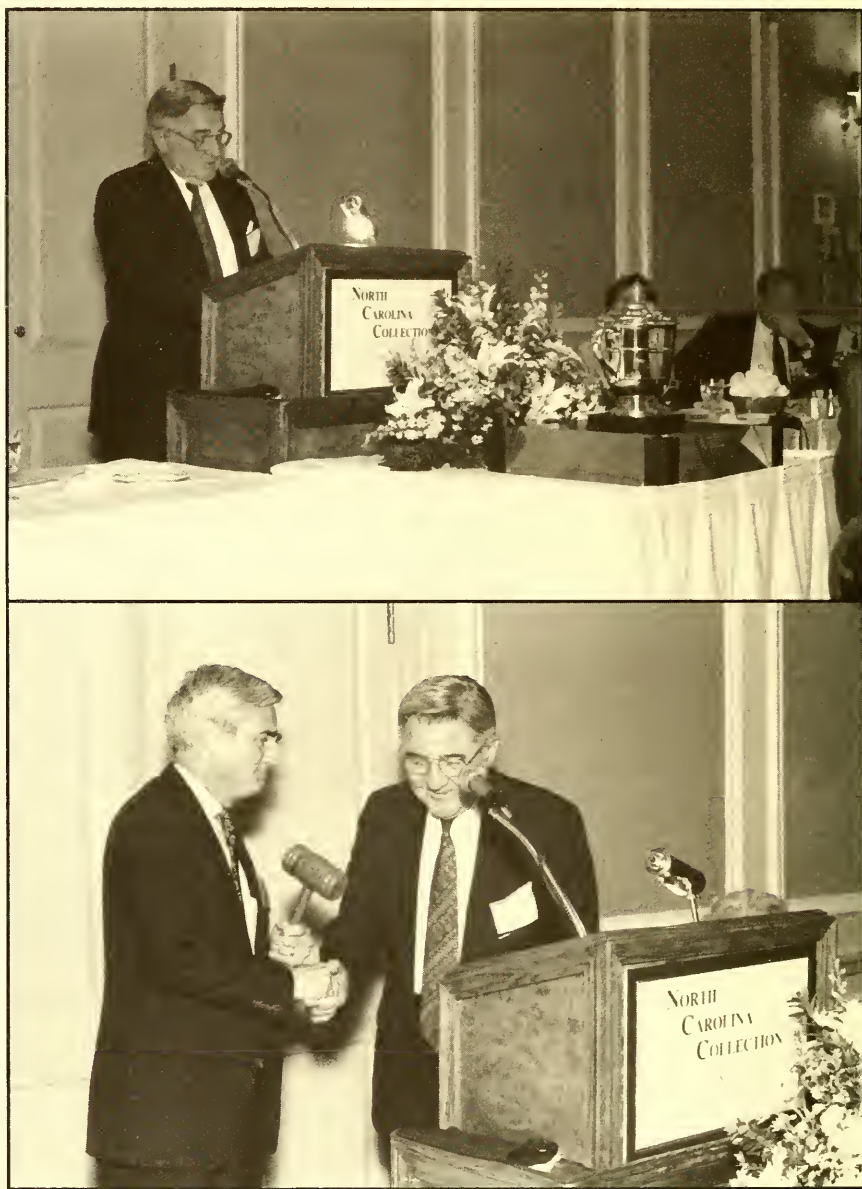
Top: Alfred E. Lemmon and Richard J. Cox. Bottom: Philip P. and Marcia Mason and Ira Galtman.



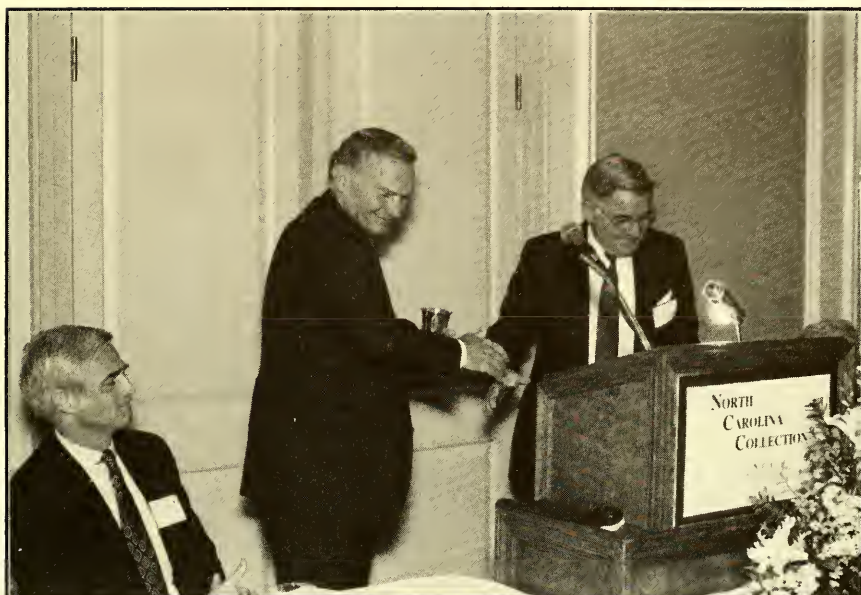
Top: Philip P. Mason and H. G. Jones. Bottom: Alfred E. Lemmon, Margaret Bonney, and Kevin Cherry.



Top: Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., and Ben M. Jones III. Bottom: Louis Leonard (Len) Tucker describes his baseball experiences with the "Burlington Indians" of North Carolina in the 1940s.



William C. Friday, president of the North Caroliniana Society, presided at the banquet commemorating the 150th anniversary of the North Carolina Collection, and, at bottom, transferred the gavel to the new president, Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard.



Chancellor Paul Hardin accepts from President Friday the North Caroliniana Society Award on behalf of the North Carolina Collection. At bottom, Vice-President William S. Powell surprised former curator H. G. Jones with a similar award.



Newly elected president Willis P. Whichard accepts a pine gavel crafted from wood removed from the original White House in President Truman's administration. The gavel was a gift from Secretary H. G. Jones (right). At bottom, President Whichard begins his term of office.



At top, Chancellor Hardin hands the North Caroliniana Society Award to newly appointed curator Robert G. Anthony, Jr., and at bottom Anthony is congratulated by University Librarian Joe A. Hewitt, NCSU Librarian Susan Nutter, and President Whichard.



At top new curator Bob Anthony is flanked by his predecessor, H. G. Jones (left), and University Librarian Joe A. Hewitt. At bottom he joins staff members Fred Stipe (left) and Pamela Warren Cross.



Several staff members join Anthony at top—left to right, Jerry Cotten, Anthony, John Ansley, Alice Cotten, Harry McKown, and Fred Stipe. Below, he is joined by Maury York, a former staff member (left), and John Sanders.



The sesquicentennial provided a reunion for many former staff members and student assistants. At top William S. Powell, curator 1958-1973, and his wife Virginia are flanked by Sandy and Donna Boswell. At bottom, Alice Cotten (right) talks with Janet and Philip Cherry.



Top, H. G. Jones is flanked by former secretaries Hope Shull (left) and Linda Lloyd. At bottom, catalogers Eileen McGrath and Lula Avent (standing) demonstrate on-line catalog to former cataloger Suzanne Levy; and Chancellor Hardin pays tribute to staff, past and present.



Many supporters of the North Caroliniana Society and the North Carolina Collection joined present and former staff for the occasion. At top are Bill Friday and Ed Lilly; at bottom are Ben Jones III, John Humber, and Ann Sanders.



At top former congressman Richardson Preyer talks with history professor Percy E. Murray of North Carolina Central University. At bottom are Henry W. Lewis (left) and Thomas S. Kenan III.



Top: Gladys Hall Coates, Ben M. Jones III, and Ferebee Taylor. Bottom: Paul Hardin and Debbie and Douglas Dibbert.

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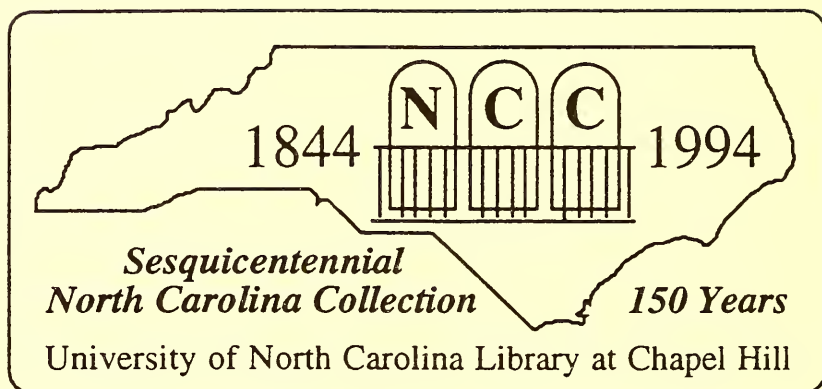
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North Carolina Collection

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